

MAIDIE'S AND ONE OF  
PROBLEM THEMSELVES

TWO STORIES OF THE KING'S DAUGHTERS

MARGARET E. SANGSTER





LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

Chap. 35 Copyright No. PZ7

Shelf S23M

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

























"WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?" SAID MAIDIE. (PAGE 22.)



# MAIDIE'S PROBLEM

AND

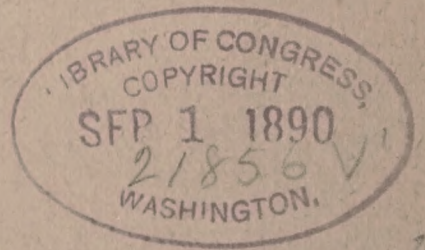
# ONE OF THEMSELVES

TWO STORIES

BY

MARGARET E. SANGSTER

35



NEW YORK: HUNT & EATON  
CINCINNATI: CRANSTON & STOWE

1890



P27  
S23  
M

Copyright, 1890, by  
HUNT & EATON,  
NEW YORK.

12-38346



# CONTENTS.

---

CHAPTER I.	
	PAGE
MOTHER'S RIGHT HAND.....	7
CHAPTER II.	
DO WHAT YOU CAN.....	16
CHAPTER III.	
TEDDY L. SAUNDERS AND TOMMY FLETCHER.....	25
CHAPTER IV.	
CHANGES.....	35
CHAPTER V.	
A LEAGUE FOR GOOD.....	45
CHAPTER VI.	
RUFUS.....	56
CHAPTER VII.	
LINKS IN A CHAIN.....	67
CHAPTER VIII.	
THE GIRLS' CLUB.....	74
CHAPTER IX.	
GREATER AND LESS.....	80
CHAPTER X.	
AFTER MANY DAYS.....	86







# MAIDIE'S PROBLEM.

---

## CHAPTER I.

### MOTHER'S RIGHT HAND.

UP and down green rounding hills and ferny dales a rumbling old-fashioned stage carried its three passengers one golden day a dozen years ago, when the wheat harvest was ripe, and far as the eye could see the beautiful Virginia fields were waving with yellow grain. How beautiful it was in the sunshine of June—a land that the Lord had blessed! Here and there, at a bend in the road, were glimpses of the winding river—a ribbon of gleaming silver; and hidden among the trees, or perched midway on the mountain-sides were cottages and mansions where happy, busy people lived, and where children grew up rosy and strong, being fed on simple food, and rioting like the plants in the fresh air and free outdoor life.

Of the three people in the stage, two were evidently strangers to the section of the country, and the other



scanned the landscape with the look of recognition which implies a renewal of acquaintance with scenes long ago familiar. The driver, a big-boned, grave-eyed man of few words, beyond an occasional chirrup to the team said nothing, and answered the questions of the travelers in monosyllables. He possessed the dignity and the reticence of the born mountaineer, and the talk which went on behind him moved him not at all, until a remark from the man who knew the neighborhood, and was coming home to it, aroused him to reply a little more at length.

"Parson Whitcomb is dead, I suppose?"

"Dead this ten years," said the driver.

"And what became of his family?"

"The wife followed him to the grave-yard in six months, and his daughter Ellen lives just around the bend in that red-brick house you see peeping up through the wheat there, in among the maples. Ellen married Si Fletcher, and they've a proper nice set of children. Maidie Fletcher's the prettiest girl in these parts; and the best. A favorite." And the driver relapsed into silence.

"Maidie Fletcher?" said one of the other passengers.

"What a pretty name! She should be a good Methodist."



"Now, my dear," said the gentleman to whom she spoke, "don't begin to speculate so soon about the inhabitants of this out-of-the-world spot. I've brought you here precisely because I want you to get rested, and I don't want you to take an interest in any body or any thing. I can't have you wasting your strength, until you have laid in a splendid supply of it."

The lady smiled, but her fingers stole upward to the little silver cross at her throat, and she whispered something that sounded like, "In His name." Her husband answered her smile; he too felt the spell, and owned the service implied by the dear talismanic letters.

Meanwhile up hill and down dale the coach lumbered along, till, around a curve, the driver suddenly reined in his horses, and pointing with his whip, said:

"There it is! Paradise Knoll. And a sightly spot, too. There isn't a prettier place in old Virginia!"

"And there," said the home-returning pilgrim, "is Si Fletcher's inn, and to that we are all bound."

It was hardly an inn, if judged by the usual meaning of the word; for the house was only a good-sized ordinary farm-house, with thrifty looking barns and outbuildings, old trees standing about the door, grass creeping to the very edge of the sill, and flowers blooming in profusion every-where. Mr. Fletcher, a portly, pleasant-



looking man of middle age, came out to receive and greet his guests, and just in the door-way stood his wife, a tall slender, sallow woman, in a delicate lilac print gown, which hung in straight, severe folds to her feet ; a woman who impressed you at first sight as clean all through, spotless and saintly, and so gentle that you wondered how she ever controlled the family of rollicking children who called her mother. By and by you discovered that it was just because she was so gentle, so tranquil, so self-ruled, that she was able to restrain and direct others. Is not this always the secret of home government, especially when joined to "a heart at leisure from itself?"

"Mother is the pivot of the machinery," Si Fletcher would say, looking with pride on his quiet wife. And indeed she was the mainspring of every thing, as a good mother must always be.

Maidie was a darling. She resembled both her parents; was impulsive and cordial of manner like her father, and yet had her mother's low voice, quiet movements, and soft brown eyes and hair. The lovely complexion, all rose tints and cream, spoke of perfect health and a happy heart, and the sun-bonnet which was always at hand to shield the girl's face from wind and sun had protected the skin so well that Maidie's face had the fine grain of a baby's.



Maidie was sixteen, well grown and strong. She could walk five miles to take a lesson on the old piano which had been part of her mother's outfit when she came from *her* father's house; she could sit in the saddle all day without fatigue; and to the younger ones she was a real elder sister—and few relationships are sweeter. From her grandfather, the circuit-rider, came studious tastes and a thoughtful turn of mind, and Maidie's dearest possessions were the books which had been read over and over by a dear old saint of a grandfather now in heaven.

It was this bright-eyed girl, a creature full of life and full of wants, whose office it was to show Mrs. Gray to the neat room which had been prepared for her occupation. Maidie did not know it, but Mrs. Gray had come to her as a King's messenger, just when her life was receptive, and when she needed most to be helped by a woman who, from a higher level, could reach down to her a friendly hand. Maidie had longed for a glimpse of the wide world beyond the mountains. Mrs. Gray was to give it to her.

"And you, dear, are a King's Daughter!" said the lady, as Maidie threw wide the shutters, letting the rosy evening light stream in upon the bare pine floor, scrubbed to snowy whiteness, upon the bed with its inviting spread



and puffy pillows, and the old-fashioned dressing-case, on which stood a ginger jar filled with pink roses, and great clusters of geraniums.

Maidie's face brightened. "Yes; mamma was willing, so I wrote to New York for the badge, and it has been a help already over some hard places; but I've been the only one to wear it here, though there are real King's Daughters in Paradise Knoll. My mother is one," said the girl reverently.

"I can believe that," Mrs. Gray replied. "Well, perhaps we may help each other, little sister. I am so glad we both wear the symbol."

"Only a sentiment," do I hear some reader murmur under her breath? Yes, only a sentiment. But, then, sentiment of the right kind is the strongest thing on this earth, and when sentiment is consecrated it takes on something of heaven's strength in addition. We shall see before we finish our story what the wearing of the tiny silver cross did to bless the dwellers in the remote Virginia village.

A day or two later, when Mrs. Gray had unpacked her books, and had given to her room those indescribable touches which a gentle woman always bestows on the place in which she lives, whether it be for a day, a month, or a year, Maidie brought to her a message. The little



easel which had come out of that wonderful trunk of Mrs. Gray's held a lovely Madonna, on the table were books, on the walls were several beautiful etchings. The girl's eyes dwelt wistfully on the books, but, with innate good breeding, she made no remark.

"Maidie," said Mrs. Gray, "I wish you to have the freedom of my books. If there is any thing here that you have not read you are more than welcome to it, and you may carry it off to your own particular haunt and keep it as long as you choose."

"How good you are!" said Maidie, picking up Miss Yonge's *Magnum Bonum*. "Here is a book I've wanted to read O, for years!" Her very fingers thrilled with delighted anticipation.

"I'm so glad you have chosen that. And when you've read it we'll talk it over together. That is one of the best pleasures of book lovers, the talking over a book and comparing impressions. But, my dear child, when do you get time to read? You seem to me always busy about the house."

"There is plenty to do," said Maidie laughing. "Biscuits and bread to make, butter to churn, sewing, cooking, mending, washing, ironing, for this great family, and only old Aunt Phyllis to help, and she is not strong. Neither is mother. So you see I must do my share. But



I read early in the morning, and late at night, and between times all day long. It's amazing how much may be managed in between times, Mrs. Gray."

"You dear child! It does not seem right for us to have come here, and added to your cares and work."

"Don't look at it in that way," said Maidie. "The money you pay will give us no end of things which we could not possibly have had without it, and then you and Mr. Gray have made us feel already as if the world were stirred into our cup."

Maidie had a picturesque way of speaking of which she was wholly unaware.

"Mr. Hildreth," she went on, "is an old friend of mother's. He has been away from Paradise for many years. We are glad he has come back, and glad he is here. In fact, we have very happy hearts here now, though we do have tired hands now and then."

"Maidie!" called Mrs. Fletcher. "The butter is waiting to be brought, dear, and your father says there is a button off the neck-band of his shirt, and the baby is very fretty, and Aunt Phyllis has one of her spells."

"Coming, mother!" said the cheery young voice, as Maidie ran first to her own room, to deposit *Magnum Bonum* on the window seat.

Mr. Gray came in from a tramp in the woods, and



met Maidie in the passage. Little Ned was tugging at her gown, she had the year-old baby in her arms, her father, with a rueful face, was holding out the shirt which needed the button, her mother, pale and weary, but tranquil as ever, was hearing her second daughter Ellen, repeat her lesson in the fifteenth chapter of Proverbs, and shaking her head at another small transgressor whose lesson had been neglected. The mother's chamber, opening off the wide entry, was the rallying ground of the great family, and the gentleman, as he often passed its open door, could not help seeing how busy and faithful the dear worn mother was. When he reached his wife's room, he threw himself down, saying :

“Love, that girl Maidie is her mother's right hand !”





## CHAPTER II.

## DO WHAT YOU CAN.

“**Y**ES, Mrs. Gray, I wish I could do more to show my love to the dear Master, but what is there that I *can* do? except to help along at home. There does not seem to be one single thing which a King's Daughter can attempt here at Paradise Knoll.”

“Paradise Knoll! What a perfectly charming name! It ought to be a heavenly place, Maidie, but my husband, who goes about so much more than I do, tells me that there is a great deal of ignorance here, and that he never saw a better field for home missions in his life.”

“Our people are so poor, Mrs. Gray. And the boys and girls have fallen out of the habit of going to Sunday-school because they have to go so far, and some of them have no shoes; and they are growing up with no religion. Mother teaches us, and her family is brought up on the Bible. The children all enjoy studying it except Tommy, and he is so naughty that he never studies his text unless he is very hungry.”

“What *do* you mean, Maidie?”

“Why, Mrs. Gray, the other boys make fun of Tommy



because he is obliged to commit the Bible to memory, and they declare *they* wouldn't learn it for any body. So the poor boy is rebellious, and now he won't study unless he's compelled to do so by a punishment. So father took him in hand, and he never can have his dinner, or any thing except dry bread and cold water, till he's said his chapter perfectly. And sometimes Tommy is very stubborn !”

“Poor boy indeed ! I'm afraid he will never love his Bible if he is made to associate it with pains and penalties. Maidie, why could not you organize those companions of his into a Sunday-school ?”

“Mrs. Gray !”

“Yes, my dear ; they would come if you should ask them.”

“You don't know them ! The boys of Paradise are famous for badness ! They would scorn the very idea !”

“I think,” said Mrs. Gray, musingly, “that I heard Maidie Fletcher wish that as, a King's Daughter, there were something beyond her own home that she could do for her Master. I believe that the home life comes first in order, but all good work for Christ must branch out. Now, you have a motive in Tommy's case, for you see the little man is affected by the public opinion of the boys with whom he plays, and he has fallen into the way



of considering the Bible a dull book, and, pardon me, dear child, I think even your mother, wise as she is, makes a mistake here. God's book should not be associated in the mind of any body with any thought but that of privilege !”

“Mrs. Gray, if I can do a thing about it I will. But we haven't a good place !”

“Maidie,” said Mr. Hildreth, who had been reading a paper in the room and could not help hearing some of the conversation, “suppose you and I go to ride to-morrow. Brown Bess will be the better for a canter, and I will ride Selim. I'll help you gather in your young people. I'll be superintendent, sexton, class-leader, and chaplain in my own person, and, what is more, I'll help you to a place !”

“O ! thank you, Cousin Dick,” said Maidie, with beaming eyes. Mr. Hildreth was a cousin many degrees removed, but Mrs. Fletcher and he had gone over the family genealogies and established a claim to kinship, so now, in friendly Southern fashion, Maidie called him “cousin.”

“Where is the place to be ?” she asked, with some curiosity.

“Wait until I show you !” was the reply.

Maidie flew about faster than ever the next morning,



that she might secure the time for her ride. In a black alpaca skirt, a pretty pink sateen blouse, and the white sun-bonnet tying in her luxuriant hair, she did not resemble a New York girl arrayed for a ride in the park, but she made a dainty, pretty picture, nevertheless, and so thought Mrs. Gray, who watched her setting out.

"Husband!" she said, "now that the sweet girl is fairly out of the way, you must help me surprise her. Quick, dear, open that box in the corner!"

"What am I to do with an incorrigible little wife who refuses to obey me when I bid her to rest, and, for once in her life, to be selfish?" said Mr. Gray, in mock despair, as he proceeded to wrench the cover from the big box which had reached Paradise by express that morning.

"Do," exclaimed the wife, "just what all good husbands do; give her her own way, as you, the best of men, have done so many years. See," she added, as the box lay open for inspection, "here are ever such pretty things for Maidie's room; I'm going to transform it. And here are hymn-books for her experiment and a beautiful pictorial Bible for Tommy, who finds his path so full of thorns and briars."

"That young man needs discipline," said Mr. Gray.

"Well, the years will give it to him," replied the wife.



"Meantime, sugar is more attractive to most children than vinegar, and I'm going to try its effect this minute. Tommy!" she called, for the yellow-haired laddie was in sight, swinging lazily on the gate.

"Yes'm!" he shouted, pleasantly.

"Come and help us do something to surprise your sister Maidie."

Tommy came on a run. During the next hour, while he trotted to and fro, climbed steps, drove nails, held cords, and made himself very useful, Mrs. Gray decided that a boy with such willing hands and feet, such clear blue eyes, and so resolute a set of the lips was a boy with good stuff in him. She saw that he needed to be set on the right track, that was all.

"My eye!" said Tommy, "Won't sister Maidie open her eyes when she comes home! Why, there's never been any thing so nice as this in Paradise that I've ever heard of. Has there, Aunt Phyllis?"

The old black woman, a jolly soul when she hadn't one of her spells, when she felt compelled to make herself and every body else "miserable," took in the pretty chamber with an appreciative glance and a nod of her gaily turbaned head.

"Dats a fac', honey," she replied solemnly; "but our Miss Maidie deserve de best of ebery ting. She's de mos'



oncommonest dear chile in dis worl' ! 'Swing low, sweet chariot, comin' for to carry me home ! ' ' ' she crooned, as she walked to her own domain.

When Maidie paused on the threshold of her room, and hesitated for an instant, with the feeling that she, or it, was bewitched, Mr. and Mrs. Gray, under cover of a half-drawn *portière* at their own door, were watching her eagerly. Tommy was ensconced in a nook on the landing over her head. Aunt Phyllis, with floury hands, left the kitchen to share the sight.

Well might Maidie have hesitated. On the floor before her bed lay a large, soft rug, in dull grays and browns, a feast of indistinct color, with here and there a touch of warm yellow which lit it up like a stray sunbeam. Swinging shelves on the wall held a half-dozen new books, and left space for the favorites among the old ones. A cool, finely engraved etching, framed in oak, hung on one side of the room, and on the other was a small oval mirror. Beside the window, where Maidie's little rocking-chair always stood, were a great pile of hymn-books, half a dozen Bibles, and twenty-five Testaments. *The* big Bible, with pictures, was on a stand close by.

"Mother ! dear mother !"

Maidie spoke low, but the mother was not far off. Mrs.



Gray had taken her into the secret, fearing resistance from the sensitive pride of the woman who belonged to an independent class to whom the acceptance of favors does not come easily.

"Maidie is so helpful and kind. You must let me treat her like a younger sister, because we both belong to the same family," she had said. And Mrs. Fletcher had consented, realizing how pleased her darling right-hand daughter would be at the pretty arrangements in her room.

"What does it all mean?" said Maidie, her eyes roving from one dainty touch to another.

"Just that you must be a very useful, happy girl, to pay your kind friends," answered the mother, whose sallow cheek for the moment glowed with a rose-flush.

"I'll try," said Maidie, as she ran to kiss Mrs. Gray.

"Cousin Dick has given me the keys of Myrtle Hall, his old homestead," she explained an hour later, "and we may ask our boys and girls there and begin next Sunday. The rooms are large, the place is in the middle of Paradise, and the grounds have been shut up so long that it will be a novelty to roam about them. Five boys and one girl have promised to come. But there's ever so much cleaning, sweeping, dusting, washing windows, before the place can be occupied. Mother, will Aunt Phyllis help?"



"No knowing, dear. She is a person of moods."

Tommy interposed emphatically. "Sister Maidie, I'll help."

"So will I," said Ellen.

"And," said Mr. Gray, "you may count on your humble servant."

"Somehow or other the rooms will be made ready," Mrs. Fletcher added in her quiet way. "It is borne in on me that you'll have unexpected help. Such a precious verse has been singing itself in my heart all this day: 'Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.'"

"That ought to be enough for a King's Daughter," said Mrs. Gray.

"Or a King's Son," said her husband.

"Well, for my part," came the loud voice of Si Fletcher, "I've never understood how King's Daughters and Sons can be contented to be so poverty-stricken and to work so hard as some of us do. I don't fancy it myself."

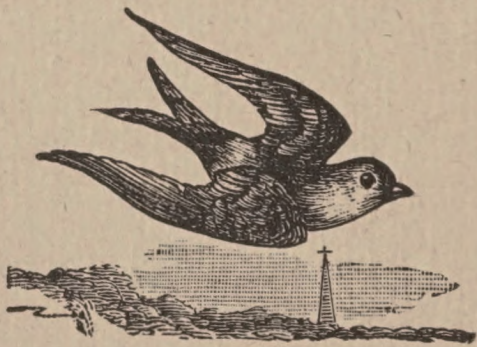
"Shall the servant be better than his lord?" said Mr. Hildreth. "You remember, old friend, that even Christ pleased not himself."

"And," Mr. Gray continued, "'seek ye *first* the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.'"



Tommy went soberly from his perch on the upper landing to his supper of corn-bread and molasses.

"I tell you what," he said to himself, "they had to learn the Bible when they were fellows like me, I'll be bound. They know lots of it now. And it isn't a bad thing either; for *they* are splendid people, and no end of good to Sister Maidie."





## CHAPTER III.

TEDDY L. SAUNDERS AND TOMMY FLETCHER.

“TEDDY L. SAUNDERS is coming to your Sunday-school, sister Maidie,” announced Tommy in a triumphant tone. “He’s coming to have fun.”

“And who pray is Teddy L. Saunders!” inquired Mr. Fletcher. “He doesn’t belong around here! The question is, What right has he to make things hard for my Maidie. Tom, you tell the young man that I’ll be after him, if he cuts up any capers.”

“Teddy goes to our school. He’s a boy from Maine, and he lives with his aunt, Betty Forsyth. He’s a good enough fellow,” said Tommy, “and he wants to come.”

“How old is your friend?” asked Mr. Hildreth.

“O! I don’t know.”

“Is he older than you are?”

“Teddy L. Saunders? O yes, sir. He’s thirteen, and I’m only going on ’leven. But all the boys do whatever he says. He’s the leader of our school.”

“Then by all means let him come, and we will set him to work,” said Maidie. “I’ve a bright idea. We’ll let him be librarian.”



More than once I have known this to work to a marvel with a troublesome boy in a Sunday-school. Is he disposed to be boisterous? Ask him to sit in front and help lead the singing. Is he restless, active, full off mischief? Give him some responsible post, and set him to work to build up, instead of to pull down. Maidie showed her good sense in this bit of a speech about the new-comer, Teddy L. Saunders, who was coming just for fun.

A great deal of hard work was done during Friday and Saturday, for those two days were all that were left of the week when Maidie's plans were matured. The old rooms, long shut up, were scrubbed and scoured, aired and sunned, and when Aunt Phyllis and the young mulatto girl, who had been pressed in to help her, had finished their tasks the house fairly shone. Then Mr. Fletcher stirred around and found seats, and an old desk for Maidie, and he announced, to her delight, that he had tuned his old violin, and meant to go over and lead the singing. Now, up the county and down Si Fletcher was noted for his fiddling, and Maidie fairly danced for joy when she heard his declaration.

"Mother dear," she whispered, "Do you think father can have found the best things after all? Is he a Christian, and did we never know it?"



For one of the griefs which had beset this dear mother's heart, and in which her daughter had given her loving sympathy, was a very old one—the lack of care on the part of the husband and father for the things which were nearest their hearts; the best things. Mr. Fletcher had often remarked, in a laughing way.

“My wife has enough religion for us both.”

In which he made a very great and grave mistake. There are some relations in which a wife cannot help her husband, nor a husband a wife. Each must have religion for himself or herself alone.

“It may be, dear daughter, that love of you will lead your father to Christ,” said Mrs. Fletcher, “and it may be that he is seeking and we have not known it. At any rate, I am glad that he will go into this work and aid you. Good will surely come of it.”

So, on Sunday afternoon, when Teddy L. came swaggering along, as full of mischief as ever a lad of thirteen was in this queer world of ours, he found himself out-generated. The bright blue eyes were met by the steady brown ones of Maidie, who held out her hand in welcome. Mrs. Gray herself asked the new recruit to take a seat where he could keep the younger boys in order, Mr. Hildreth told him that he would probably be appointed librarian, and before Teddy knew how it



had happened, he was pledged to assist the new enterprise with all his might and main.

People who know poverty only as it exists in great towns or as it hides in New England villages, who know only the unthrift of a careless Irish peasantry transplanted to the plenty of this new world, cannot understand the cheerful yet absolute penury of some Southern localities. Around Paradise Knoll there was a scattered circle of worn-out little farmsteads, where large families, huddled together in small half-ruined cabins, had almost nothing to wear, lived on corn-bread and bacon, and were as jolly, irresponsible, and ignorant as ever were white people under the sun. Not the beggars of Naples or Spain were more averse to work, and never were grown-up men and women more contented in very disagreeable circumstances.

Between the children of these lazy, profane, and irreligious people and those of the better classes of the community there was little intercourse. Maidie's desire to do something for the poor, neglected little ones was a puzzle to the girls in her own rank, and it was explained by one of them in this way:

"You see, Maidie Fletcher's grandpapa was a preacher, and mamma says he was perfectly bent on saving souls. Of course, she has inherited the taste."



"It's a good thing," replied the person to whom she was talking, who happened to be Tedd's aunt. "Why don't you join her, Lucy?"

"O! I don't care for being a domestic missionary," was the flippant answer. "I leave that to serious people, like Teddy. For my part I don't believe much in trying to elevate the lowly."

Teddy was studying a tough geometry lesson. He looked up from his book, and the blue eyes had a peculiar flash in their glance.

"Miss Lucy," he asked, "do you believe in Jesus?"

"Why, of course, Teddy, I'm not a heathen."

"Well, he came to preach the Gospel to the poor. I've made my mind up that I'm going to do this work, if I can. I haven't said much about it, but from what I can see, home missionaries and foreign missionaries are both treading in his steps."

A change had come over Teddy, not the less real that it was very sudden, and accompanied by no period of apparently gloomy or even deep thought or self-questioning. The Holy Spirit has many different ways of approaching a soul, and one of the grave mistakes made by us, in our blindness, is in expecting that every soul shall be led to the kingdom along precisely the same lines. If we get to the Master, and he accepts our



service, it does not matter very much by what steps we were led. All his life Teddy Saunders will bless God that when he went to the little Sunday-school in the woods, intending to make a disturbance, and be a trouble and a terror, through boyish love of fun, a girl's sweet look and a man's cordial words changed his purpose, and really, though nobody dreamed of it then, set him on another track for the rest of his journey in the world. Conversion means a round turn, or a turn round, you know, and the blessed turning came to Teddy at the instant that Mr. Hildreth, following out Maidie's happy thought, said to him.

"You shall be librarian, sir."

One cannot well be a librarian if he has no books, and the stock on hand was very meager. But as yet the scholars were few in number, and the majority of the few could not read. To teach them orally was necessary, and after devoting themselves to repeating verses, and "lining out" hymns, and telling Bible-stories, the teachers determined on beginning with first principles, and imparting the alphabet. As soon as it was known about the country-side that such work was going on the school began to grow. The second Sunday the original ten was doubled, on the third there were thirty-five children present, and on the fifth there were fifty,



some of whom had walked a distance of six miles, over rough mountain roads, to gratify their curiosity, and to learn to read.

Why did they not attend the day-schools? is the natural inquiry here. Partly because these were attended by the children of the more respectable and of the well-to-do and the two classes did not meet on equal terms, and partly because some of the bigger boys and girls were able to work and earn a little money for their parents, who could not spare them to go to school. Chiefly, I think, they came because the prayers of Maidie and her friends were answered; and they were very earnest in praying over the school.

"I should have a good deal of trouble in keeping order," said Maidie to her mother, one Sabbath when the school had been large, and the children rather inattentive, "if father were not such a champion, and if he didn't strike up a rousing tune when the boys grow obstreperous. You should hear them strike in with, 'I must be a lover of the Lord.' It's really grand."

"How does Teddy behave?"

"Teddy is magnificent. There is nothing I suggest that he is not quite ready to do, and he has written to his home in Maine to see if the friends there don't want to send us more books for the library. As for



Tommy, he does whatever Teddy tells him to do, and the little fellow was never so good in his life."

"That is true," the mother answered. "I haven't had to reprove him in ever so long. Tommy is becoming a comfort."

As she spoke there was the sound of a crash in the kitchen, and the rattle and bang of pots and pans on the floor, with the breaking of dishes, put an end to the conversation. Both mother and daughter flew to the place. A tableau met their atonished eyes.

Tommy, pale and ghastly, was holding up a bleeding hand, and trying to keep from screaming with pain. The window was broken, the table was upset, Mrs. Fletcher's best china tea-things were in fragments, and Aunt Phyllis, a picture of fury, was gesticulating and scolding.

"You bad, bad young limb!" she cried, "Won't you jes' get *one* whipping when I tell yo' father what you done broke. Climbin' on de kitchen table, and puttin' yo' paws clar through the window-glass. Yo've done mischief enough for one day. Miss Maidie, you needn't plead for him. He'll get his come-up-ance dis time, shore!"

Aunt Phyllis was a privileged person, and Tommy's accidents had before this been rewarded by an applica-



tion of his father's switch, but now there was no question of punishment in the case, for just as Mr. Fletcher, who had heard the uproar, appeared in the door-way, Tommy for the first time in his life quietly fainted away. Then the consternation was greater than ever for a few moments.

"He was rushing after a butterfly when it happened," Maidie explained to Mrs. Gray later, when the boy had revived, the hand been bandaged, Aunt Phyllis soothed, and Mrs. Fletcher, with tears in her eyes, had ruefully gathered up the fragments of her cherished household treasures.

"He ought to have been more careful," Mr. Fletcher said; "but this time Tommy's recklessness has been sufficiently punished, for his hand will be useless for some time, poor little man!"

"The dear Lord took our only boy to himself," said Mr. Gray, "and that may have made me feel more tenderly toward the children of others, but I never feel that it is right to punish a child for an accident, or for a fault which is simply the result of a thoughtless impulse. Such faults usually bring their own consequences, as in Tommy's case. Willful naughtiness is different, of course; yet even then I believe in waiting for a better mood, if one can. Love is a so much stronger force than anger.



Aunt Phyllis, like most of her class, is vindictive when a child's offense gives her trouble. It should not be so with those who are her superiors in point of education and knowledge."

"I'll throw my switch into the fire," said the good-natured inn-keeper, "though I've seldom used it, as my children know. The hardest punishment to them I do believe, is always the grieving of father and mother."

Just then a rider in hot haste drew his bridle rein at the door.





## CHAPTER IV.

## CHANGES.

THE messenger had brought a telegram which summoned the Grays immediately to the North, as the only train they could reach that day was ten miles off, and they could not wait for the stage, their packing was hurriedly accomplished, Maidie helping with all her might, though her heart sank at the thought of doing without Mrs. Gray just when she had begun to learn so much from the dear lady, and to feel for the first time in her life what it was to have a sympathetic helper in her study and aspiration.

"I will write to you often, dear," said Mrs. Gray, "and you must go on with your drawing and your English literature as best you can. A few minutes a day, *every day*, tells wonderfully in the end on one's improvement. And Mr. Hildreth will be here to help you in the school, and your father, too, is a host."

"We will do our best, dear Mrs. Gray," said Maidie, bravely; but when the friends were fairly off, driving away with Mr. Fletcher in the only conveyance the inn afforded, Tommy proudly perched on the front seat by



his father's side, the girl sank down beside the bed in the dismantled room and cried and cried.

In the midst of her sobs Aunt Phyllis appeared on the scene, speaking for once so quietly that Maidie knew something serious was the matter.

"Miss Maidie, honey, dere no time foh cryin' now. Your mother done got a fearful misery in her breast."

Maidie needed no urging. Her mother's attacks of pleurisy were the most alarming experiences of her life; the keen-edged pain, cutting knife-like at every breath, the fever, the gasps of agony—Maidie knew how dreadful it all was, and there was no doctor nearer than the next village, five miles over the hills. Down-stairs she hastened, forgetful of the Grays and their going, in this more pressing trouble, and presently she was at her mother's bedside, laying mustard poultices on the seat of pain, and hushing every sound in the household. The worst agony was soon alleviated, but after such an attack Mrs. Fletcher was helpless for days, and the burden of housekeeping devolved upon the willing shoulders of the young daughter.

It was late in the afternoon before her father returned, and one glimpse of his face showed Maidie that another trial was before her. Mr. Fletcher had occasional fits of despondency, when it was almost impossible to arouse



him to interest in any thing, and the sight of the usually cheery, bustling man, sitting listless and apathetic in his chair as if he were completely baffled and beaten, was enough to make every body in the house discouraged. In these seasons it sometimes seemed as if an actual cloak of gray fog had settled down on the scene, through which you could not penetrate, nor take one step ahead.

Mr. Fletcher had never been a successful man. Always when he had made a little advance in life some obstacle had barred his way, or some disappointment thrown him back. Now, with Mr. Gray and his wife paying liberal board, much larger than he had usually received, he had hoped to clear off a mortgage which was a millstone around his neck, and, like most sanguine people, he had planned to do much more than this. For in the wake of the Grays his kindling fancy had seen a train of rich and generous people coming to winter or summer at Paradise Knoll, and it had been his dream to send Maidie to the art school in New York, which he knew was, to her thought, a far-off gleam of heaven; to give Tommy, by and by, a good education, with several years at Lexington or Williamsburg; and, in short, the schemes in the good man's head, which all started from the coming of the two quiet people from New



York, quite surpassed those of the famous milk-maid counting her chickens before they were hatched. The collapse was terrible; the more so that common sense whispered that his dreams and schemes had a very airy and cloudy foundation indeed.

But the finishing touch had been put, though Maidie did not know it, upon his hopefulness and courage, a mile or so from home, where he had met Mr. Hildreth all unaware that the Grays were gone. Mr. Hildreth had a letter in his hand, and was coming from the post-office.

"Si, my friend," said this gentleman, "I'm very sorry, and more on Maidie's account than my own or yours; but some land interests of mine in Florida require immediate looking after, and I'm compelled to leave you all at very short notice. It was the last thing I thought of this morning, turning my back so soon on dear Paradise Knoll, but a wanderer like myself never finds time to set his foot down in one spot long,"

"It never rains but it pours," is a homely adage, but a true one. Maidie had nothing to do except make the best of things, and she set about doing it. Taking no notice of her father's depression, she began preparations for a very good supper, and while Aunt Phyllis tossed up a feathery omelet and made such golden brown



waffles as were never to be found outside of Paradise inn, Maidie took out a noble ham, and cut slices of brown bread and white, and when the coffee was steaming on the range she called the family to the table.

“Why, daughter,” said Mr. Fletcher, “you don’t take it to heart as I thought you would, this upsetting of every thing. I suppose worrying over mother has made you forget all about the hard times we used to have; they’re coming on us again, dear, as fast as they can. I shouldn’t be surprised if we were all turned out of house and home before long—the mortgage foreclosed, the stock sold, and we all in the poor-house.”

“Father, dear,” said Maidie with an arm around his neck and a caressing hand smoothing back his gray hair, “come and have your supper while it’s hot. I’m so glad that mother is over the pain for this time that I haven’t room in my heart for any thing but thankfulness. We lived before the dear Grays came, and we’ll live now that they’re gone.”

“But we can’t live on air, Maidie, with this great family!”

“Which of us could you spare, dear father?” said practical Maidie.

“O! if you put it so. not one,” and cheered by the good fare, the sweet face, and the kind ministries of the



courageous girl the father ate, the cloud was lifted, and he went out to attend to his evening duties.

"You is a bressed angel, Miss Maidie; an' dat am a fac'!" said Aunt Phyllis.

"But, Maidie," said her father, coming in and resuming the conversation, "where are we to get two hundred dollars by next spring unless we borrow? and I've made up my mind never to borrow again; and there's nobody, so far as I know, who has any thing to lend."

"We haven't to make up our minds to-night, dear," answered Maidie. "Let us sleep on it."

This, as a rule, is good advice. The morning beams cheerfully on many a soul which last night groped in obscurity, and when we imitate the Psalmist, who said, "I laid me down and slept, I awaked, for the Lord sustained me," we generally discover that the Lord's promises have been kept, and that he has sent his aid just in time.

" It may not be my way,  
It may not be thy way,  
And yet in his own way  
The Lord will provide."

Early the next day, while Mrs. Fletcher, all suffering gone and only the weakness left which follows pain, was lying among her pillows, pale and sweet as a lily, her husband rose, quietly dressed himself, and stepped out



into the porch. It was such a morning as made Paradise Knoll seem fitly named. The clematis vine which garlanded the porch was a mass of waving tendrils, shining leaves, and delicate purple bloom, humming-birds and wrens were flitting and darting through its luxuriant foliage, roses were scenting the air, pansies were making a many-hued carpet in the great oval bed before the inn door, and far away the lifted summits of the mountains sparkled and gleamed through veils of amethyst and silver.

Maidie joined her father, slipping her hand through his arm and giving him a good-morning kiss.

"Papa," she said, "I've a project."

"The little head is a famous one for projects," he answered. "Unfold it."

"It is a very ambitious one, and I feel very timid about telling it, because I am so very sure of my youth and my imperfections, and yet, papa, I believe, if you and mother will let me try, I can make something of it."

"Well, dearie, I'm all attention."

"You know the school-house at Cliffside has been closed for months, and the board cannot find a teacher who can afford to go for the little salary which is offered. Now, since I've had the Sunday class I've found out that I like to teach, and though I'm not very far advanced I'm



beyond any of the children who go there to school, when it's open. Living at home, with no board to pay, I could take the salary, and it would be not only enough for me but a real help in the house, and all our children could go there to school; and in any case, father, there would be no harm in my trying when there's so little coming in."

"My brave little maid, you shall have your own way about it," said Mr. Fletcher; "and I'll try and imitate your example, and not be a coward any longer. But how do you propose to carry on the Sunday-school, dear, now that our good friends and helpers have left us so suddenly?"

"I've thought of a way," said the girl, whose head was famous for planning. "It is to get the young people around, and the older children, with the little ones too, if they are willing, to join a society; we might call it a League, something like the wonderful Endeavor societies that we've heard so much about, and we'll have meetings, and govern ourselves, and do no end of things, once we are fairly started and set going."

"O, Maidie, Maidie! what a thing it is to be young. But the boys will be your chief draw-back—the young irrepressibles."

"The boys shall be my guard of honor," said Maidie,



"and if here isn't Teddy coming as if he had read that beautiful verse, 'The king's business requireth haste.' Teddy, what is it?" she exclaimed, as the lad, flushed and breathless, stopped, hat in hand, before her father and herself.

"The new library has come, Miss Maidie."

"The new library?"

"Yes, indeed. Didn't I tell you that I wrote to my big brother up home, and told him what we needed, and begged for old books, and—there never was such a dear fellow in the world before—he's sent us a spick and span lot of new books, a hundred of them, Miss Maidie, and not a dull nor a stupid one in the list."

"Before a single book is given out, Teddy, they must every one be covered, and a catalogue written, and the books must be properly numbered and classified."

"You see," said Mr. Fletcher, patting Maidie's head, "my daughter has the qualities necessary for a woman of business!"

"Now, Teddy," said Maidie, not heeding this interruption, though she smiled at her father's compliment, "will you do something for me?"

"Any thing I can," he said gallantly, "command your humble servant."

"Well go out to-day and ask all the girls and boys



to meet me in our big south parlor—that will be far enough from mother not to disturb her—to-night at seven o'clock, and then we'll make our arrangements."

The commission was most agreeable to Teddy, and at the hour named the south parlor was filled with a bevy of bright, expectant young people.

Meanwhile Maidie had sent a modest note to the school committee, declaring her readiness to take charge of the Cliffside school for the next six months.

"The child is undertaking too much," sighed the mother, when she heard of it.

"She is perfectly well, overflowing with energy, and to try will make her happy," said the father. And the mother gave her consent.





## CHAPTER V.

## A LEAGUE FOR GOOD.

**Y**OU would hardly believe it, but one of the worst influences at Paradise Knoll came from the source of evil which, more than any other, causes misery and woe in every part of this land. Do you want to know what is at the bottom of most of the domestic unhappiness, most of the poverty, most of the crime in our great republic? I can tell you in one word: Whisky! And Paradise Knoll had this serpent to contend with, just as many a larger town and crowded city has.

When Maidie said to the thronging friends assembled in her parlor, "Let's make our League a temperance society," there was at once a breeze of opposition. Public opinion at Paradise Knoll had not yet reached the point it has with us in most of our homes and surroundings, and it was customary for the hospitable, whenever they wished to show courtesy or pay honor to a friend or guest, to offer him a tiny glass of home-brewed cordial or a mint-julep, or else a glass of wine from a cobwebbed bottle; these being the usual accompaniments of the rich cake of which every housekeeper had a stock always on



hand in her store-room. Mr. Fletcher, as a keeper of a temperance inn, had lost, his neighbors said, thousands of dollars, and often and often had he been urged, and almost tempted, to yield his principles and set up a bar, and forego the stand he had taken never to sell intoxicants. Loving God was not at the root of his independent firmness, at least not at this time, but he did truly and earnestly love his wife. And the daughter of a Methodist circuit-rider who had fought the devil and all his works—including this worst of the latter—could not have eaten bread bought with rum, yes, and with the price of the souls of men. Maidie Fletcher had grown up among total abstainers; a rare thing in that section of the country, in that period.

However, she did not then press her point. Christine Evelett, a sweet girl about her own age, suggested that their league should do all the good it could, taking for its motto, "The greatest of these is charity," which she explained meant not alms-giving, but unselfish love. Maidie's little cross, with its three graven letters, I. H. N., gave her the idea of self-denial, but Lawrence Griffith said truly :

"There are some who don't like the look of a cross, Miss Maidie; we cannot take that for a badge."

"I don't see," said Teddy, flashing out a quick answer,



“ why any body who claims to be a Christian ever objects to a cross. Haven’t we a right to it if we are followers of the Lord, I’d like to know ? ”

“ It isn’t necessary to have a badge,” remarked Will Maynard. “ We can work together, have our club, and hold our meetings without any symbol. I reckon, now, Maidie means us to take hold and carry on that Sunday-school of hers. How can we, though, if we’re not church members ? ”

There was a discussion on this point which was long and serious. To teach children the way to Christ when you haven’t found it yourself is a very illogical proceeding on the face of it, but, on the other hand, thousands of people have found the blessed Saviour in just this simple manner, entering on a life of devoted service through this gate.

Maidie said :

“ I don’t want to preach to any body, nor to have you think that I am dictating, but I’d like to ask this : ‘ Is there one here who hates Jesus ? Is there one who would be his enemy ? ’ ”

“ No, indeed ! ” was the ready chorus.

“ Then, if not enemies, you are friends, and the best thing you can do is to give a friend’s service. And now let us put down our names, and go about our first bit of



work, which will be to put Ted's library in order for circulation."

This proved a very delightful piece of work, bringing the young people into pleasant fellowship for several evenings. On the last, at the appointed hour of meeting Will Maynard and Lawrence Griffith were not on hand, and when they did arrive Lawrence was excited and quarrelsome, evidently not quite himself. Will was uneasy, and did not rest until he had succeeded in taking Lawrence home, a step which the usually gentlemanly fellow resisted, even to the extremity of blurting out an oath.

An awe-struck silence fell on the group when the two friends had gone.

Christine Evelett was the first to break it.

"Notwithstanding *this*," she observed, "I'm not in favor of asking any one to sign away his personal liberty."

"It is very ungentlemanly and shameful for Lawrence to have come here when he could not control himself," Marcia Dillingham said, haughtily drawing up her head, and speaking in a cold and affronted voice. "I think he should beg our pardon, or resign from the League at once."

"Would it not be kinder, girls, to take no notice? He will be miserably unhappy when he awakens to what he



has done, and you know it is an inheritance in his family. Doubtless, the poor boy is doomed. Remember his father and his grandfather—hard drinkers, both.”

“And his granduncle, who was drowned in crossing the ford one very stormy night, after he had been at a convivial party.” This was said by a girl who had not hitherto spoken, Rachel Dunbar.

“For my part,” said Maidie, “all that you say makes me more than ever in favor of introducing a pledge into our constitution. Talk of personal liberty! The greatest slavery of which one can think is that to a wretched habit. ‘Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin,’ fettered and bound in chains, and made, like poor blind Samson, to grind in the prison-house. I am in favor of liberty under law, not of license to do wrong and lose one’s self-respect, and one’s power to do good.”

“But, my dear,” her mother said, for Mrs. Fletcher was a favorite with the young people and sometimes came into the room where they met, and where, like bees or beavers, or some other busy creatures, they worked to finish the covering of their books, “a pledge taken in one’s own strength never reformed any body. There must be something much stronger than that, much more vital. All life-strength comes from within. *I* haven’t your faith in that which is merely outward.”



"What do *you* think the best safeguard for a tempted soul, dear Mrs. Fletcher?" said Marcia, speaking gently as her eyes rested on the saintly face of the elder woman.

"A true faith in the Master; a real love to him; a will set in full accord with the divine."

"And how is that to be gained?"

"As one gains any other good thing, dear child: by seeking, by asking, by knocking. 'Whosoever will' may have the full sweetness of belonging to Christ, may have the joy of being a worker with him."

"But suppose," and there was a general hush, for every body felt the spell of Mrs. Fletcher's earnestness and of Marcia's mood; "suppose one has no particular feeling of need, or of want—no great sorrow for sin, no emotion such as she knows she ought to have—what is she to do?"

"We attach too much importance to feeling, my dear. Right feeling is good, but right doing is better. I believe in such a case in going to the Lord in prayer, and saying, 'I haven't a single feeling that I ought to have, I haven't even the comprehension of my need, but I give myself to be thy servant, and I'm ready for any thing thou hast for me to do.' The hearty doing for Christ's sake would be the precursor of the right feeling. Conversion, as you must have heard before, is only turning round.



It's serving under the King's banner, instead of under that of the rebels."

"Please tell us what books you would advise us to read on devotional subjects, Mrs. Fletcher?"

"The Bible, first and last; and never be afraid that you will exhaust it, for it's deeper and wider than the sea. And, next to the Bible, there's nothing to compare with the *Pilgrim's Progress*, the most enchanting of books.

Strange to say, very few of these young people, though living in an atmosphere favorable to mental growth, were very familiar with the old classic of John Bunyan, on which it is safe to say their parents could have passed an examination at their age. It was voted that the League should take up the book as a regular study, and read some of it at every meeting.

Meanwhile the thought of Lawrence pressed heavily on Maidie's mind; she wanted to do what she could to save him, and still she hardly knew how to set about it. "Wait for the Lord's leading," said the sensible mother.

The opportunity came when it was least expected. In a rural place like Paradise Knoll every body is ready to undertake a neighborly office for every body else, and where the mail arrives, not four or five times a day, as in New York and Boston, but only twice a week, the people who happen first to pass the post office are



quite likely to carry the letters and papers to those who live on their homeward route. Lawrence, riding to mill with a bag of corn to be ground into such fresh snowy meal as one finds nowhere out of the South, was hailed by the postmaster, with

“Hallo! Lawrie, won't you take Miss Maidie Fletcher her mail? She's the favored one this week, surely!”

And he held out a whole sheaf of letters and papers for Lawrie's willing hand.

Among the budget was a long, delightful missive from Mrs. Gray, so charmingly like a talk with the sweet woman's self that Maidie lingered over the closely written pages with a gladness beyond her power to tell. A girl's love for an older woman who has reached out a helpful hand to her partakes of a worshipful quality, and becomes in her life both aspiration and possession.

Lawrence had delivered his letters and was going away when Mrs. Fletcher detained him.

“You are not going anywhere else before you go home, are you, Lawrie?”

“No, Mrs. Fletcher.”

“Then, do lend me your strong arm and bright eyes for a few minutes. My boy Tommy is hardly tall enough to assist me in managing curtains and driving in nails for pictures. You see, we have had a house-cleaning.



Whenever we do have one Mr. Fletcher flies. He takes that day to go to market or to town."

Lawrence lent himself most cordially to help Auntie Fletcher, as, being his mother's life-long friend, he had been taught to call her. And then Maidie came, and as he descended the step-ladder asked him why he had not come to their League meeting.

With down-cast eyes the lad hesitated an instant. Then he replied,

"To tell the truth, I'm not good enough for such company."

"O, Lawrence!"

"'Deed I'm not. There's nothing before me but destruction. I may as well keep away from decent people."

"Lawrence," said Maidie, "how can you speak so? You, with your youth and health—and manhood and the world before you! Don't be weak! Be a man."

"It isn't in me to resist temptation."

"It's in Christ to enable you to do so. When we are weak, *then* are we strong."

"He, that overcometh shall inherit all things," said Mrs. Fletcher, returning from another room, with her arms full of snow-white linen. "Though your sins be as scarlet, ye shall be whiter than snow."

The gloom on Lawrence's face only deepened, and



Mrs. Fletcher turned away, breathing a prayer for him in her heart. Suddenly Maidie had an inspiration.

Loosening from its place on her breast her silver cross this daughter of the King laid it in her friend's hand.

"Lawrence," she said, pleadingly, "take this, and do me the favor to carry it in your pocket, so that you can sometimes touch it when you are tempted, or take it out and look at it when the desire to do wrong is very hard to resist. Don't you remember the '*In Hoc Signo Vincas*' of Constantine? This is the most precious thing I own, Lawrence, for nothing else ever spoke to me as this tiny cross has, when I've been discouraged or tired, and I know it will not fail you."

"Thank you, Miss Maidie!" said the boy, simply. And I do not think the less of him that as he mounted his horse and turned homeward he could hardly see for the tears.

Midway on the road between the inn and his mother's farm, he stopped and kissed the tiny talisman, and made a resolution, which, God helping him, he has thus far kept.

If any body reading this chapter has inherited a tendency to any evil, or weakness, or sin, let that person take the greater care to guard the spot where the enemy



will be most likely to make his attack. The soldier sets the battle in array where the enemy is weakest, it is true, but, if he be a veteran and skilled in tactics, he also sets his strongest defenses where he is sure that the fortress is most likely to be attacked.





## CHAPTER VI.

## RUFUS.

“**M**AKE your school-room as pretty as you can,” wrote Mrs. Gray, “and be sure always to wear a bright ribbon at your neck, and dress your hair prettily. You will find it five times as easy to manage the children if you have them in a pleasant place, and they will mind you much more promptly if they are rather proud of you.”

“Keep the upper hand, Sis !” said the old stage-driver, stopping at the door, and handing in an express package. “Don’t you be afraid of those ornery, ill-behaved brats over at Cliffside. Be right up and down with them, and begin as you intend to go on.”

Which being the longest speech the good old fellow had ever been heard to make, quite exhausted his powers, and he chirruped to his team, cracked his whip, and away went the stage, with a mighty rumble and stir, over the hills and out of sight.

Well, the first glimpse of the dingy Cliffside school-house was not very inviting. Maidie smiled to reflect that Mrs. Gray’s ideas of school-rooms were probably derived from the trim, carefully painted, swept and



scrubbed school-house of New England and New York ; that she did not know this ill-lighted, ill-constructed, barn-like place, with its backless seats and battered desks, its rusty stove, tin dipper hanging behind the door, and dictionary with half the leaves torn out.

But for the League I'm sure I don't see how she would have managed. The League came over in a body the Saturday before school opened ; there was a descent upon that room, and it found itself turned inside out before one could say the " presto, change ! " of the old fairy tales. Such a bevy of young people, working to such an end, created a positive excitement in Cliffside, and the wood-choppers, on their way to the forest, surveyed the proceedings with curious eyes.

" I know what we can do," suddenly cried Christine, who had heard of Mrs. Gray's letter, " we can trim this school-house with birch bark and make it sweet with fir and running pine. Let's do it. These good men will help us," she whispered confidentially to Maidie.

And they did. They were cutting splendid lissome birch-trees down every day, and they gave the girls all the silvery bark they needed, and told them where the running pine grew thickest, and loaded the boys with the aromatic evergreens, so that the school-room received its ornamentations.



Came the first Monday morning. On the desk stood a blue pitcher, in which was a great bunch of golden-rod. The young teacher, who had cantered from home on her sure-footed gray pony, was first in her place. One by one the scholars appeared, all shy, some looking defiant, some happily expectant.

"I must make them my friends from the first moment," said Maidie to herself, while she sent a silent prayer up to God that she might make no mistakes.

Her heart sank as the door opened and a tall, sun-burnt young man, long-limbed and loose-jointed, walked straight through the rows of little ones, and made an awkward bow to the bright-eyed creature who, though she was trembling in her shoes, kept down every outward sign of embarrassment.

"Miss Fletcher, I want to learn to read," was the abrupt explanation the youth gave for his presence. "I don't know my letters even; I've had no chance. I've got to begin with the babies in the infant class, but I've saved a little money now and I'll do my best."

It was a manly thing—and so Maidie thought it—yet she could not feel quite easy when the great six-footer took his place in the A B C class. One comfort was that he studied so diligently he soon surpassed the rest, and in a very few weeks had mastered the rudiments,



was reading in the first, then in the second and third readers, and in the Bible, and American history, and at the same time took hold of spelling, arithmetic, and grammar with all his might.

Who was this boy, Rufus Hitchcock? Inquiry revealed the fact that he was a waif who in childhood had drifted to this mountain-land, nobody knew precisely how, from some great far-off town. He had lived around among the farmers, earning his board and clothes somehow, and the year before the school opened under Maidie's care he had worked in the forest with the wood-choppers. Nobody suspected it, but the friendless lad had a great hunger for learning, and a will which had been set on acquiring it, so that when Maidie came he seized the chance, and was not contented till he had gotten hold of the wonderful keys to all knowledge, the arts of reading and writing.

"I intend," said he, gravely, one day when Maidie was complimenting him on his perseverance, "to be a college graduate yet."

"How old are you, Rufus?" said Maidie.

"Eighteen, or thereabout," he replied. "Yes, I know it sounds like an impossibility, but nothing is impossible to the man who does not get in the way of God's plans; who sees his goal, and goes straight ahead to it."



"You'll have a long pull, Rufus, but I believe you'll win," said Maidie. "God will open the path."

"I can trust him," the brave fellow answered.

Teddy Saunders was not inactive in these days, and he set himself to find out how Rufus had become a Christian.

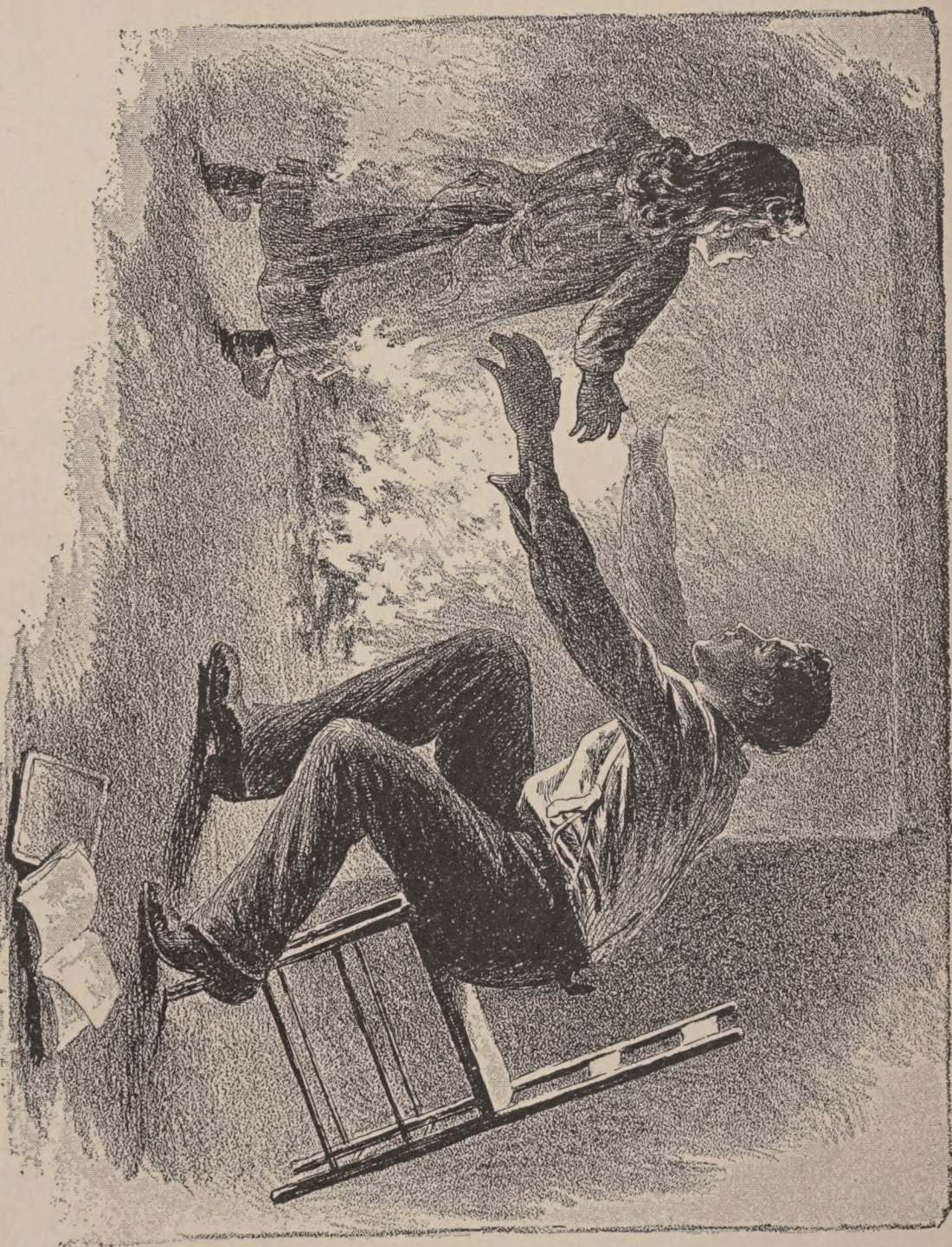
It puzzled him that a young man who had been brought up without any particular advantages should have such clear views of religion, and be so ready to show his colors. "Where did he learn it?" cried Teddy.

The question was still awaiting a solution when the opinions of some of the League—that Rufus was rather a muff or he would not submit to be taught like a small boy at a school kept by a young woman—underwent an entire change. Rufus proved himself something of a hero.

He was studying his lesson in decimals by the blaze of a pine-knot fire, in the living-room of the farm-house where he did what he could to help, paying also a trifle for board, when suddenly there was a sharp cry, and looking up, he saw the little daughter of the house in flames. Standing too close to the fire, a puff of wind had caught her white apron, and it was ablaze in a breath. What should Rufus do? There was no shawl, quilt, or rug at hand in the simply furnished room. The



“LOOKING UP, HE SAW THE LITTLE DAUGHTER OF THE HOUSE IN FLAMES.” (PAGE 60.)









floor was bare. He had no coat on, and the one thing he could do was to catch the child in his arms, wrap them around her, smothering the flames, and then rolling over and over on the floor; he saved her life, but was painfully burned himself.

Maidie, on her way home from a call which had detained her an hour after school closed, passed at the very instant that this had happened. The commotion in Farmer Gifford's cottage caused her to stop.

The next moment she was inside. Rufus, his face pale and drawn with agony, smiled bravely in answer to her gaze, while Mrs. Gifford, crying over her little daughter's singed curls and blistered hands, did nothing to relieve the greater sufferer.

"Courage, Rufus!" said Maidie, cheerily, going to the cupboard which she supposed contained the family stores of medicine. It was as she hoped, a big bottle of limewater and linseed oil was in readiness for just such accidents, and soon bandages were applied, and the immediate aching and burning were soothed.

"You must come to the inn," said Maidie, decidedly. "Mrs. Gifford will have enough to do to take care of Lulu, and father and mother will know how to look after you. Come, I insist. I have our old buggy here, and I'll drive you."



"I couldn't," said Rufus.

"Nonsense," answered Maidie. "You are one of my scholars, and you must mind me. The Paradise young people will all tell you that I always have my own way."

Rufus staid for weeks and months at Paradise Knoll. Mr. Fletcher was not as strong as he had been, and after Rufus's recovery his ready and obliging services were in great demand. It became a wonder to them how they had ever contrived to exist without the boy.

One evening Teddy had sauntered in. Tommy was roasting apples on the hearth. Mrs. Fletcher had laid down her knitting to read her nightly portion of the Bible.

"Rufus," said Teddy, "tell me when you became a Christian."

"I've always been one. I lost my mother, or she lost me, when I was a little chap. I remember a big town with ships standing close as trees in the woods around the wharves, and tall black chimneys shooting up to the sky. There were church bells too, and sometimes bands went around playing. I remember a time when a fever spread fast, and people died every day, as if they were grass before the mower's scythe. There was a lady, I think she was my mother, but I don't know, for I was a wee chap, not higher than that table; she heard me say



my prayers, and she told me, whatever came, I was God's child ; not to forget that ; and to learn all I could, to be honest, and always to pray. I remember so much, yet it is vague and floats off like a cloud. I think my mother died. I don't know how I came here. I must have been sick, or perhaps I crawled off in my loneliness and got on board a boat or a train."

"You've had a hard life, Rufus."

"Not very. I've had enough to eat, and I've paid my way."

"What do you mean to be?" asked Mrs. Fletcher.

The answer surprised every body.

"A missionary to the heathen."

"Why, Rufus Hitchcock!"

"Yes'm. I've made up my mind. I shall go through college first, and then I'll prepare for some field ; India or Africa, or wherever the Lord needs me."

"Why, Rufus!" said Teddy again.

Rufus did not long remain Maidie's pupil. The League had been looking out for some real bit of work, and here it was. They had not much money individually, but when they combined their small savings the sum was enough to pay Rufus's expenses at a good preparatory school at the North.

His independence revolted at the idea of accepting



aid, but common sense told him that he had no right to refuse what the Lord sent. Besides, as Mr. Fletcher pointed out, he could regard whatever they did for him as a loan, to be returned sooner or later in genuine assistance to somebody else.

So, for a while, Rufus passed out of the daily sight and hearing of Paradise Knoll and Cliffside. But letters came from him often, and he was not bent from the purpose of his life. Maidie, toiling on in her quiet little school, and being a good daughter at home, had set one ball in motion which should keep on rolling till it reached the ends of the earth.





## CHAPTER VII.

## LINKS IN A CHAIN.

THE Giffords' cottage, Maidie's little brown school-house in the pines, a long, lank, ungainly lad of eighteen with a high ambition in his heart and no money in his pocket, the elegant home of a New York millionaire, and the library of a scholarly college professor in a town up among the hills of New England would severally seem quite widely separated. Nevertheless they were links in a chain.

Rufus, with his earnest purpose, was at one end, and the helpers God raised up for him were at the other, and all were workers together with God.

Among Maidie's pleasantest occupations was writing a weekly letter to Mrs. Gray, and, naturally, after the rescue at Mr. Gifford's her letter was full of Rufus and his plans and hopes. Mrs. Gray, on the morning she received this epistle, was packed up and ready for a visit to Middletown, and before starting she had just time enough to run in upon a friend whose wealth was held in stewardship for the Lord, telling her the story, and leaving it as a seed-thought.



She was not surprised when, two days after her arrival at Middletown, as she sat in the professor's library reading a review, a missive from New York was put into her hand.

"You had a reason," it said, "for telling me about the brave lad in Virginia. I think he is a proper candidate for my educational fund, and I'll be glad to have you tell me how I shall best be able to aid him in his efforts. I never give money to students, but I loan them what they need, and allow them to pay me back to the uttermost farthing, so that the money may go to somebody else in similar circumstances. Rufus, from what I hear, deserves help, and must have it at once. You say that he intends to be a missionary one of these days. I take it for granted that he is a church member."

All of which was duly sent to Maidie, and Maidie, writing back, explained that Rufus was not yet a professing Christian, though he said that he loved the Saviour.

"He hesitates to take this final step because he is afraid he may not be consistent, and may dishonor his Master," said Maidie. "But I feel that he is wrong, and we in the League are all praying that his eyes may be opened."

"For a believer to hesitate about joining the Church,"



Mrs. Gray replied, "because he is afraid he may not walk in a consistent way, is about as reasonable as it would be for a soldier in time of war to refuse to wear his uniform and shoulder his musket. All we have to do, as good soldiers of Christ, is to follow our leader and obey our marching orders. Rufus will discover that the Master has bidden us confess him before men, and when he is convinced of that I do not think he will like to disobey."

A great many excuses are made about this very matter, and people plead that they are not good enough—as if they had any goodness of their own; and that their ideal is too high—as if it could be higher than Christ's; and that they can be as good Christians out of the Church as in—when that is weakness itself; for who can be wiser than the Lord himself? The one answer is, "Obey the Lord's command."

He has said, "This do in remembrance of me." And I wish my young friends especially to reflect that every year they defer this manifest duty they make it harder for themselves, and increase the danger that they will allow old age to come finding them in the ranks of the enemy.

Jesus says, "*Whosoever is not with me is against me.*"



prospered, the place grew in importance, and he saw the chance to lay up something for his old age, and to educate his other children.

The Grays, after an interval of some years, returned, and were struck with Maidie's improvement. She had developed into a beautiful young woman: a certain shy dignity enhanced her charm of manner, and in her low tones and sweet smile there was the grace of a heart at leisure from itself. Still teaching her little school, she was the benefactor of the country-side, and few people were better filling their place than she.

But Mrs. Gray was hardly satisfied: "Maidie should see something else," she said to her husband. "She must go to New York. I want to take her to picture galleries; to stand with her before the "Angelus," and watch her face as she sees those peasants standing with bowed heads in the sunset, when the bell is calling to prayer. I want her to hear the grand chorals of the Messiah, and take her to sit at the feet of eloquent men. The dear child has done her duty so nobly in this sphere I want to widen it, and give her an outlook on a finer, richer life."

"You are not afraid of spoiling her for this, to which she must return?" asked Mr. Gray.

"Not in the very least. Her fitness for this proves to me



her readiness for that. Maidie's character is formed. The girl who lives the inward life she does will not be thrown out of balance by any accidental circumstances."

"Can she be spared?"

"O yes! The colonel and her mother will both be glad to give her up for a time. They can well spare her, and her friend Christine will carry on the school, which has grown to be a necessity in Paradise Knoll."

"Well, my darling wife, I am only too happy when I am able to forward any plan of yours. I should be glad if we might take the dear girl to Europe. We have no daughter of our own—here."

"I should have been very happy had the Lord given me such a daughter as Maidie Fletcher," said Mrs. Gray, "but I must be content to have her for a child by adoption, so far as her mother will share her. If our own little Mabel had lived!"

And she sighed deeply.

"Mabel is ours too, dear wife," said the husband, laying his hand tenderly on hers.



## CHAPTER VIII.

## THE GIRLS' CLUB.

LIFE in a great Northern city was entirely the opposite of every thing the young Southern girl had known, and she brought to it a fullness of interest and a bright receptivity which were perfectly charming to her friends. The little cross upon her bosom gave her every-where the sense of being among sisters, for she saw it gleaming on the velvet gowns of stately middle-aged women, fastened around the necks of little cash-girls in the shops, and peeping from under the shawls of the hard-working poor. The badge of the beautiful order every-where spoke to Maidie with a welcoming word, and she realized that, even when she was far away and solitary, she had been in companionship with a host of workers who had something to do for Jesus.

"Our Ten are going to entertain a club of east-side girls on Thursday evening," said one of Mrs. Gray's young friends to Maidie. "Will you come with us and help? Mrs. Gray says you've been helping along ever since she knew you first."

"Dear Mrs. Gray! She is too kind. I think my part



now must be to look ; not to help," said Maidie. "What do you do?"

"The girls for whom our Ten now and then provide a happy evening work as pressers in a hat factory, or as operatives in a plush box factory. They have very long hours, and few of them earn more than three dollars a week. Occasionally a very good worker makes five dollars. Out of their earnings they must clothe themselves, and either pay their board, or give something to the family living ; generally the latter. Their homes are in stuffy tenements, and they have no chance to have much enjoyment such as we have in our more fortunate lives ; the different Tens in our church are working hand in hand with these girls. Some of us go one evening a week to the club-room, which a King's Daughter built and furnished, that we may teach the girls to cut and make their clothing. Others give lessons in cooking. They have had mending lessons, and lessons in laundry work. But we do not aim to teach them any thing in the one evening a month when our Ten goes there ; our object is to entertain them, and we'd like to have you come."

"I'll be delighted," said the girl from Paradise Knoll.

The evening arrived. Chaperoned by Mrs. Elmore, the youthful president of the Thoughtful Ten, the girls repaired to the club-room. Already, at half-past seven,



it was filled with an eager, wistful throng, and Maidie's memory flew back to the early days of her Sunday-school in the pines, for there was the same soul-hunger in these faces that she had seen there. When people are famished for the bread of life the look in their eyes is always one of great longing.

Maidie found herself in the midst of a group of girls, who were intensely in earnest; she had, from choice, asked to be seated among the girls of the club, that she might enjoy the evening from their stand-point. In her quiet gray gown, with her serene face, and hands folded on her lap, she attracted no attention, and the girls talked freely in her presence.

"I hope," said one, "that Miss Weir will play the Moonlight Sonata. Nothing else ever carries me up to heaven's gate as that does."

"I can stand part of it," said another, "but I like the merry, rollicking tunes best. I like to hear Miss Granger sing 'When the Flowing Tide Comes In!'"

"Hush! Miss Eldridge is going to recite."

Miss Eldridge, a plump brunette in a black dress, with no ornament except her little cross, stepped to the middle of the room, and began her recitation. She gave Browning's "Hervé Riel" and "How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix," and as the listeners



applauded, and called again for something else, she finished with this little lyric :

“ It was Jesus who was passing !  
And the fevered mother lay  
Gasping in the lowly cottage  
As she had the livelong day,  
Flushed and spent and well-nigh gone.  
And the weary sun went down.

“ It was Jesus who was passing !  
And anon they bring him near.  
Wondrous was his look of kindness,  
Wondrous were his words of cheer.  
Wondrous was his touch ; it gave  
Life her parched lips to lave.

“ It was Jesus who was passing !  
Lo ! the blinded eyes grew clear.  
It was Jesus who was passing,  
Jesus who in love drew near.  
Jesus swept away their night !  
Jesus, who restoreth sight !

“ It is Jesus who is passing !  
Hasten to his feet to-day !  
Never did the tender Saviour  
Turn a suppliant away.  
Bring to him your wants and prayers,  
Bring to him your *little* cares.

“ It is Jesus ! Don't you see him ?  
Don't you hear him ? low and sweet,  
'Mid the myriad sounds of Babel,  
Is the falling of his feet.  
*Come* to Jesus ! *Come* to-day !  
Jesus Christ has passed this way ! ”



When the speaker's voice had ceased, the hush was broken by a tremulous sob from some one in the back of the room. Instantly Mrs. Elmore started a hymn.

"I heard the voice of Jesus say,  
'Come unto me and rest;  
Lay down, thou weary one, lay down  
Thy head upon my breast!'  
I came to Jesus as I was,  
Weary, and worn, and sad,  
I found in him a resting-place,  
And he hath made me glad!"

After a little the "refreshments" were served. The visiting Ten had brought cake and ice-cream. The cake was not bought at a baker's but made at home, the very best that could be thought of—with chocolate and fruit and icing—and the cream, in dainty shapes, was the choicest New York could furnish. How the girls ate, and how the Ten flew about to wait on them!

"Well," said Maidie to Mrs. Gray, "the world is much the same every-where. While we were at the club to-night I thought of Paradise Knoll, and of a time we had once in the little school, where ginger-snaps and lemonade formed the refreshments, and 'ather played the violin, and I made a speech, when Teddy Saunders followed me in a recitation. I wonder where Teddy is now."

Just at this moment a maid brought in a card.

"Mr. Theodore Ledyard Saunders."



"Amazing!" exclaimed Mrs. Gray. "I did not know that our friend was in New York. But Teddy always had a way of popping up like a jack-in-a-box. He'll be surprised at meeting you!"

The young gentleman in faultless evening dress, with a flower in his button-hole, was the same merry-eyed Teddy, and his delight when he met Maidie was expressed in unmeasured terms.

"Old Rufus'll be no end glad!" he declared. "He's working hard at the seminary, as you know. The most gifted old fellow! Maidie, you did a good thing when you started him going. He's a perfect steam engine!"

"I didn't start him!"

"You didn't! Then I've been holding a wrong opinion all this time. Anyway, you were an instrument, Miss Maidie; you'll not deny that!"

"No," she replied, smiling. "Now, tell me about yourself."

"I'm in the mill that turns out doctors," answered Teddy. "I'll be able to write M.D. after my name in a year or so. And I hope I'll be an ornament to the profession. Don't you need a doctor at Paradise Knoll?"

Teddy was himself. Maidie, who had been a trifle homesick, rallied under his gay talk, and went to bed with a light heart.



## CHAPTER IX.

## GREATER AND LESS.

THE girl who began by being her mother's right hand, finding her first duty in her home, was not likely to be perplexed very long by questions of greater and less, in the wider fields of living. It simplifies all our problems, and so Maidie found, to ask in any embarrassment, "What is my next step?" and I don't know a safer method of solving difficulties than by always asking, "What would Jesus do?" "Were he in my place, how would he act?" One may do this without irreverence, in quiet faith that light will be given in answer to prayer.

The pace, even in religious matters, was a great contrast in New York with the pace in Paradise Knoll. Meetings every night in the church, and one must choose which to attend, while parties, concerts, picture-galleries, and other social forms of entertainment equally legitimate put in their claims, so that instead of retiring almost with the birds our lassie was up till midnight for days together. Then on Sunday there was the mission school in the morning, the church service, the church



school, a special Bible-class, a young people's prayer-meeting before evening service, and the service itself. Then somebody, hearing Maidie's rich contralto voice, begged her to come into the choir, if only for a very few weeks, adding that choir practice and rehearsals would of course take some time, but that it would be time well spent.

Just as Maidie was considering this proposal, in walked a sweet-faced woman with gray eyes, brown hair, and tiny leather bag on her arm.

"I am the visitor and collector of the Woman's Home and Foreign Missionary Society in Dr. C——'s Church, which Mrs. Gray attends," said this winsome lady. "We should like to have Mrs. Gray's young friend join our junior circle, and possibly she would take a district for the winter." Apologetically she proceeded. "Being a visitor you will have more time on your hands than our stay-at-home girls, who are occupied with classes, lessons, and every sort of engagement besides."

Maidie paused, and in the short silence, Mrs. Gray came to the rescue.

"My dear Mrs. Julian, I do not intend to let Maidie assume any outdoor work while she is my guest. She is here for rest and change, and to get, to absorb, all the good she can, but she is not to give out, for she has done nothing else all her life."



"One must draw the line somewhere," said Mrs. Gray when the visitor had departed, "and I won't have you quite worn out. May I ask, Maidie dear, why you are so grave this morning?"

"I'm exercised over the moralities of shopping," said Maidie. "Last evening we spent at the Girls' Club, you may remember."

"Yes?"

"And we did what we could in the direction of entertainment for those girls, many of them half-fed, and pallid from lack of fresh air and warm clothing, but, as I've been thinking it over, I do not see that our visit, and visits like it, do much real good."

Just then a caller was announced. She came flying in, a beautiful girl in a brown jacket and gown, and a plumed hat shading her golden bang and her bonny blue eyes—a pretty figure, full of youth and health."

"O! Mrs. Gray and Maidie," cried this brilliant creature, the same girl who had recited at the club on the evening before, "I want you to put your things on, and go with me to Twenty-third Street. The shops are just full of the loveliest goods, and it's bargain-day. Quantities of embroidered skirts and robes are to be had for almost the cost of the material, and there are some dressing-sacques the like of which you never saw, and



selling for a mere song. This certainly is the golden opportunity of the impecunious girl."

Maidie looked doubtfully at Mrs. Gray. She did not know whether courtesy would allow her to say what she thought, and yet her soul was stirred and she could not keep silence.

Mrs. Gray gave her an encouraging glance.

"Our little Virginian is not quite sure that she approves of bargains," she said. "Come, Maidie, say what is trembling on your lips."

"I don't wish to be rude," Maidie began, "and yet I don't know how to escape from seeming abrupt and unkind. Do you know, I think what working-women need is not charity, but justice? Some of us are very ready to give to them with one hand, but are we not robbing them with the other? *Somebody* made those frilled petticoats and sacques that are sold for a song, and what was she paid for them? *Somebody's* labor was ill-paid that ladies in their carriages might dash up to the doors of the great stores, and buy armfuls of dainty garments at a price that is inadequate. For my part, I'd rather wear the plainest, coarsest things that had been properly paid for than avail myself of such unequal dealings with the poor. I can't help feeling that in these large towns many good women, with the very best inten-



tions, are doing more harm than good. What ought to be done is to pay the working-girls fully for their labor; then let them pay in turn for whatever they receive."

The pretty girl looked puzzled, but unconvinced.

"When you dip into political economy you carry me beyond my depth," she said. "I know that I, as a King's Daughter, want to do right, yet what earthly use would there be in my refusing to buy these bargains? I am only one obscure person. Thousands will purchase cheap goods, and my one bit of self-denial will be no more of a protest than a pebble cast into the sea."

"Ten times one is ten," said Maidie, earnestly.

"And ten times ten is a hundred," added Mrs. Gray. "My dear girls, if you could get the multiplying power of the Tens fairly set in motion in this one injustice you could put an end to it. 'Fair work for fair wages,' and no advantage taken by the thoughtless rich woman over her poorer sister, and the truly Christian leaven would permeate the whole social lump."

The Grays did not go to Europe, and Maidie hearing that she was needed at her own home returned there after a visit of some three weeks. She was brightened by contact with the wider life of the great Northern city, but as the trains whirled along, and after leaving Wash-



ington, she met, at each way-side station, the signs that she was in a different, less exciting, more provincial and also more tranquil, part of the country.

Black faces appeared frequently at the railway stations; women in blue gingham gowns, with big shoes, and gay kerchiefs crossed over their breasts, brought baskets of luncheon-fried chicken, light rolls, delicious sandwiches, and gingerbread. At Harper's Ferry a broad-shouldered gray-haired gentleman boarded the train, and to her infinite satisfaction Maidie recognized her father.

"Why, father dear!"

"I came to meet my little woman," he said, in answer to her exclamation. "Maidie, all Paradise is waiting to greet you. Mother and Tommy and the children are simply wild with pleasure. We have missed you more than we can say."

The home-coming was the sweeter that the last half of the way Maidie journeyed with her father's hand held in hers, and that, when she grew tired, she could lay her head down comfortably on his shoulder. After all, there is nothing in life much more delightful than getting home after an absence, meeting the home dear ones, and, if you are a child of the house, finding father and mother all ready and glad to receive you.



## CHAPTER X.

## AFTER MANY DAYS.

YEARS slip along so swiftly that before you are aware the baby who was cooing in his cradle yesterday is a boy romping among his mates, a man toiling at the anvil or at the ledger, a father himself, with his own babies around him. To the child, a year, twelve long months, seems an interminable stretch of time. It is the reverse with us as we grow older. The years fairly rush.

It is again summer at Paradise Knoll, and the wheat harvest is waving ripe and golden on the hills. The old inn has been changed into a great humming hive of girls. A girls' school, noted far and wide through the South, is in successful operation there. A wing here, a gallery there, and the old roomy building has been transformed and beautified, till only one who looks closely can be sure it is the same place.

In the church-yard there are mounds over the graves of Colonel and Mrs. Fletcher, who slept at last, after a long period of usefulness. The village has grown, and a railroad, having tunneled or climbed the mountains, has brought the great world nearer, so that no



longer the incoming tourist must take his passage in the rumbling old coach, so respectable and comfortable in its day. Maidie is no longer a resident here. The school, an outgrowth of the little one over which she once presided, is in the charge of Rev. and Mrs. Theodore Saunders. Our old friend Teddy is very popular with his pupils, and his wife, who was once little Lucy Fletcher, leads the girls in that path which all true women should tread. There is no flourish of trumpets about the school. It does its work very quietly, but the women who go from its classrooms will be faithful wives, tender mothers, or gentle Christian friends and workers, if they do not choose to marry.

In the halls and dormitories there is a great flutter of anticipation, and gay groups are seen in conference on the June morning when Miss Fletcher, a missionary from India, returned for a year's rest in her native land, is to appear again in her old home, and tell the girls something about her work. This circumstance in itself does not account for the excitement which every-where shows under the eager faces, in the ripples of laughter, and in the earnest low-toned talk.

"It will be splendid, having a wedding here!" says Mary Lucas, whose mother was the Christine Evelett of the League in olden days.



"It would be more interesting if the bride were young," says another bright-eyed girl, to whom any body over twenty-five is middle aged, and who regards thirty as almost antique.

"They have known each other for half their lives. And she taught him to read. It is most romantic; like an affair in a story-book," cries another.

"Mr. Hitchcock is a fine scholar, an elegant man, a successful minister and missionary. What more can you want?" added another still. "Yet he was once a poor little homeless boy, and he had a hard struggle to get the rudiments of an education. Paradise Knoll was his starting-point, and he has always said, so mamma has heard, that if ever Miss Maidie would marry him the wedding should take place here. I am glad that it is to be in this half-year, for next I'll be at home, and I like to assist in such an event."

"You have no idea, girls," said one of the teachers, approaching the group, "how much Paradise Knoll owes to Maidie Fletcher. Why, years ago, there were saloons in the village, and little drinking-places in the hills, where hundreds of young men were ruined. The settlement at Cliffside was a perfect hot-bed of ignorance and crime. It is surprising how things have improved. I'm glad that Maidie is to be married in the very church which was



built by the efforts of her friends, and by those whom they interested."

Rufus Hitchcock had been able, under God, to carry out his plans. His work had been in Calcutta and Maidie's in Madras, for, after her parents' death, and the growing up of her brothers and sisters, she had been free to undertake the work of teaching in a Hindu girls' school. The two had not met nor corresponded, and it was only by what men call accident, though it is really by God's providence, that Rufus and Maidie quite unexpectedly had been presented to one another in Philadelphia, at a great missionary meeting. She had sat in the audience listening to his impassioned plea for help in the field, so wide, so fruitful, so neglected; and he had caught a vision of her face as if it were the face of an angel. Afterward, when the two clasped hands, he felt that he could never give her up, and so successfully did he urge his cause that Maidie at last gave her consent.

The girls made a perfect bower of the church on the day of the wedding. Flowers wreathed about pillars, and hung in festoons wherever the nimble fingers could hang them. A bell of lilies and roses wafted fragrance over the bride's head, and the chancel was carpeted with bloom.

Two very old gentlemen and one elderly lady had



come from a great distance to be present on the happy occasion. It was whispered about among the school-girls that Mr. Hildreth, one of these men, an old friend of Miss Maidie's father, intended to leave her his fortune, and "if he does, she'll spend it in zenana work!" affirmed one young lady, with an assent of regret.

"It is probably only good-natured gossip," said a friendly teacher, "but, Miss Marian, if you had the faintest notion of what zenana life is, how vacant, how aimless, how dreary, you would pray that a dozen good men would leave fortunes to enable Christian women to carry forward the work which will lift their sisters in India into a brighter, purer day."

Mrs. Gray, though her hair was like the drifted snow, and her step had grown feeble, was as eager and intense as ever in her friendships, and as strenuous in whatever she undertook. Always fragile, she was, at seventy-five, hardly so feeble as at forty, and she gave the crowning touch to Maidie's wedding-day, when she gave her the last kiss on her lips as Maidie Fletcher, in the name of the dear mother in heaven.

There was no wedding-march, but just as the little procession, walking from the seminary to the church, set out on its way, a choir of young people began to sing:



“ Blessings on the bride to-day !  
Bloom and perfume strew her way !  
Sweetest wishes her attend !  
Christ her onward steps defend !  
“ Wheresoever she shall rest,  
There be those she loveth best ;  
Wheresoever be her home,  
There may those she loveth come !  
“ Blessings on the happy bride ;  
Peace and love with her abide ;  
Heaven look down to give her cheer,  
So we pray who hold her dear.”

The words, sung very softly, came to an end just as bride and groom stood at the altar before the minister. After the simple ceremony, and while the congratulations were being offered, one of the congregation, a plain farmer, confided to his wife that,

“ Thet air chune was very pretty, but it was kind o’ one-sided. Not a word in it about the husband, and he’s a fine appearing man.”

“ O John !” said the wife, “ that’s all you know. The *bride* is the person who’s talked about on the wedding-day. Nobody else is of any account !”

“ She’s a true woman ! If ever I have a daughter, may she be like Maidie Fletcher,” said the pastor’s wife.

If this little story has any message for you, my dear girl readers, it is summed up in this one sentence. Try, each of you, God helping her, to be a true woman !









“AND, PLEASE, MISS DOROTHY, WHEN WILL YOU COME?” [PAGE 119.]







ONE OF THEMSELVES







# CONTENTS.

---

## CHAPTER I.

	PAGE
THE GIRL WITH NO TALENT.....	99

## CHAPTER II.

MOTHER'S HELP.....	107
--------------------	-----

## CHAPTER III.

GAINING AN INCH.....	115
----------------------	-----

## CHAPTER IV.

HOLDING THE COPY CLOSE.....	123
-----------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER V.

THE JUDGE'S IDEA.....	132
-----------------------	-----

## CHAPTER VI.

THE ONE TALENT TEN .....	142
--------------------------	-----







# ONE OF THEMSELVES.

---

## CHAPTER I.

### THE GIRL WITH NO TALENT.

THREE girls lingered in Cora Meredith's charming parlors after the rest of their Ten had gone home from a meeting. Dorothy Gay, Linda Creamer, and Nell King were often called the Three Graces by their friends, who laughingly said that the three girls ought to have been named Faith, Hope, and Charity. But not in the order I have given would the pretty names have been appropriate, for Nell was Faith; Linda, Hope; and Dorothy, Charity personified.

Cora was bustling about—setting the room in its usual order, putting away the work which the girls had left in her care—and now and then pausing to hear snatches of the conversation which the trio were carrying on in animated tones.

“I tell you, Linda,” said Dorothy, wistfully, “I haven't a single decided talent in the world. I often think I'm not even equal to the man with one talent in



the parable. I haven't so much as miserable half talent."

"For shame, Dorothy!" said Nell, in her eager way; "when every body loves you so dearly."

"O, that's only because every body is so sweet, dear."

"Nonsense, Dorothy Gay. People love those who are lovable. I call it more than a talent to win hearts by one's mere presence; to please all sorts of men and women, from gruff Mr. Ogden to frivolous Jack Peel, from old Aunty Griggson to little Beth Jones; to light up a room and cause a ripple of pleasure as you do wherever you come, darling"—kissing her with girlish enthusiasm.

"But," said Dorothy, gently persistent, "you won't understand me. Nell, for instance, is a born artist. She paints on velvet and china, illustrates books, makes pretty sketches, does a hundred quaint and beautiful things. Linda's playing and singing are exquisite, and she consecrates her rare gift to the Master. Nobody can be cold and hard where Linda is singing; she has an angel's dower. I heard Dr. Elmendorf say so only yesterday. Cora writes poetry and stories, and finds hundreds to read them. Every girl in our Ten, except poor little me, has a specialty of some kind. I am the only perfectly humdrum person in the set."



Cora Meredith laid her hand softly on Dorothy's plump shoulder.

"Don't be distressed, dear," she said. "There is a good deal of work which can be done by girls who, like yourself, confess to having no talent in particular. The world would not get on comfortably without the help of the quiet, common-sense workers who fill up the chinks."

Dorothy thought of Cora's words that night as she was preparing for bed. Before her lay a letter from her Sunday-school teacher, asking her to undertake the "Preston girls" for the next six months. I must explain that Mrs. Howell's class was a very large one, and composed of girls from different social ranks and worldly conditions. Mrs. Howell had a theory, which she had successfully put into practice, with regard to Sunday-school work. For mission schools, as such, she did not specially care, but she thought that what is usually considered the mission-school element should be incorporated with the ordinary church schools, the caste-line being blotted out and entirely ignored. In her class all met on an equal footing, and varieties of the external order, such as dress and etiquette, were not openly noticed. But all the time the good teacher was watching, seeing where she could sow the seed of the better life, trying to bring together girls who could be mutually



helpful. Within the last year it had been Mrs. Howell's custom quietly to give certain girls in charge of certain others, who should endeavor to brighten and beautify their lives, give them a wider outlook, and assist them in little ways which would not hurt their self-respect.

Molly and Trudy Preston were the two girls from whom in the whole circle Dorothy Gay felt the most distinct repulsion. They were not pretty, and Dorothy had a love of beauty which was instinctive. Worse than that, they were not clean. Their skins had the grimy look which announces that the bath is infrequent and soap seldom used. An actual rim of dirt accentuated the line of Molly Preston's bangs, and a similar neglected look was visible in Trudy's ears. Worse than the dirt which disfigured these girls was the tawdry character of their gowns; cheap material in the extreme of the prevailing fashion, with ends and tags, and a general impression of loudness and show, made the appearance of the Prestons not quite respectable. Then their half-defiant, half-familiar, and generally swaggering manner was to the last degree disagreeable.

"So I am to 'undertake the Prestons,'" said Dorothy to herself, with a little shudder, but without a thought of declining. Mrs. Howell's scholars were always ready to



attempt at least whatever their leader advised. Were they not pledged to work "in His name?"

"I wonder what I am to do for them?" was her next thought. And then, opening her little volume of *Dew-drops*, she found the text for the day, taken from 2 Sam. 24. 24:

"Neither will I offer burnt-offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing."

Under the text there was a little prayer which Dorothy read with the Prestons in her mind, for, having resolved to "undertake them," she began the work then and there on her knees. This was the prayer:

"Keep me, Lord, now and at all times. Never let me think, whatever age or station I attain, that I am strong enough to maintain the combat without thee. Nor ever let me imagine myself so weak that thou canst not support me! May I be in all things kept by thee, for my Saviour's sake. Amen."

Here was a secret of strength; a true inspiration.

The next day at five o'clock, Dorothy, a pretty little figure in her neat brown walking-dress, with jacket and hat, gloves and boots all trim and unobtrusive, set out to call on the two for whom she already felt responsible. They were straw-sewers and worked at home. So much she knew.



Her heart beat fast as she arrived at their flat ; up four flights in a decent tenement-house, with nothing squalid or dirty in the oil-cloth covered halls and stairs, though, on the other hand, the contrast between the bare plainness of this home and the elegance and luxury of Dorothy's own was very marked. Already Dorothy had learned how sensitive is the pride of the poor, how quick are the working classes to resent patronage, and she felt a little doubt as to her reception. She put out a little gloved hand and knocked timidly.

The door was opened an inch or so, and a hard-featured, gray-haired woman, with sleeves rolled to the elbow and a blue-checked apron falling to her feet, looked grimly out.

" May I see Molly and Trudy, please ? "

" No, you may not. The girls are busy, and have no time to waste. Go about your business ! " And the door was slammed in her face.

This was a novel experience for Judge Gay's daughter. She stood irresolutely a moment or two, hearing a sound of voices in agitated discussion within, succeeded by silence and not by a re-opening of the door. Turning, she was going slowly down when a motherly woman on the next landing accosted her kindly.

" Thim Preston girls is to be pitied, miss. Their



mother's that contentious there's no living with her, especially when she's out of sorts."

Dorothy made no reply except by a bow. She went straight to Mrs. Howell, and, seated on a hassock at that lady's feet, related her first experience in "undertaking the Prestons."

"I haven't even gained an entrance," she said. "Dear Mrs. Howell, do you want me to try again?"

"Of course I do," said that indefatigable woman. "What you tell me makes me more than ever sorry for those poor girls, and it explains something as well. I understand better than I did why they are always on the defensive. They have to be, with such a mother. But—like all mothers—Mrs. Preston has her good points, no doubt, if we can only find them. Perhaps it's as well, my dear, that you should have had this rebuff; it will show you that even in benefiting others perseverance is necessary, and it will set you and me to thinking what to do next."

"Why do those girls never attend any of the church sociables?" asked Dorothy. "One of the reasons we have church sociables is that just such people may make acquaintances."

"I'm afraid, dear, it is because such people do not feel at home when they venture among us that they are



shy of our sociables. They do not want to be condescended to, nor treated as though we were better than they are; yet when they do accept one of our general invitations they are conscious of being aliens. Dorothy, I want those girls lifted to a higher plane. I want to give them a nobler ideal, to advance their interests, and you, better than Nell, or Linda, or Cora Meredith, can help in this, for you have no one pursuit which cuts a deep swath into your time. You can go to those Prestons and get at them by being, in a sense, one of themselves. Do you catch my meaning, dear?"

"I fervently hope," said Dorothy, with a shrug, "that I may teach them to be clean and to mend their stockings and gloves. I shudder at dirt and rags."

"But these girls have been used to both. They will do better if you will show them how," said Mrs. Howell, cheerily. "But if you would succeed you must learn to love them, dear."





## CHAPTER II.

## MOTHER'S HELP.

MRS. GAY, Dorothy's mother, was the sort of sweet, jolly, blessed mother who is always a girl's best friend. She and her daughter were like sisters in their friendly confiding one in the other. When she heard of Dorothy's repulse she thought that very likely some help from herself might be necessary to let her little Red Riding Hood enter the barred door without incurring the danger of being eaten up by the wolf. What are mothers good for if not to smooth the way for daughters' feet?

So, bright and early one morning, Mrs. Gay sent a note to Mrs. Preston. It was written on thick cream-laid paper with a monogram on the corner, it had a faint perfume of heliotrope, it was sealed with thick splashy wax, and altogether was a very "stylish" looking affair. Furthermore, the bearer of the note was no less a personage than Robert, Mrs. Gay's elderly and dignified coachman, who was directed to wait for an answer. Not one of these details was in the least accidental—Mrs. Gay knew their value.



Taking the missive gingerly between a wet finger and thumb Mrs. Preston dried her hands and sat down to read it. She was prepared to say "No" to whatever it requested, but Robert's portly presence and air of expectancy prevented her from speaking, and the contents of the note were so amazing that her first opposition died upon her lips. Who was this strange lady who had divined the passionate love for God's beautiful flowers which, in Mrs. Preston's heart, had survived change and time and sordid poverty? Or had the lady only guessed it? Any way the effect was the same, and almost marvelous.

"My daughter Dorothy," the note ran, "is a member of the same class in Sunday-school with your girls, and has mentioned them to me. We desire to become better acquainted with Molly and Trudy, and Dorothy asks your permission to call on them to-day. She will bring you some primroses and begonias, which need a sunny window. Will you see what you can do with them? I have asked a half dozen of my friends to take flowers from me, tend them for a few months, and then help me in getting up a plant show for the benefit of the orphan asylum. Please oblige me in this matter." The note was signed "Mary Barclay Gay."

"Them Gays is real quality, an' no mistake," said Mrs.



Preston, reflectively, "and old Squire Barclay must ha' been her father, and he was the real blue blood. Well, lemme see," becoming suddenly aware of Robert, a statue in blue cloth and brass buttons, standing patient as fate in the shadow of the door-way. "O! tell her, Yes, certainly. The young lady may come."

Robert had a private laugh at the air of condescension with which this was said.

"Mother," gasped Molly, "it's the same girl you wouldn't let in yesterday!"

"An' what has that to do with it, Miss Pert? If I choose to keep strangers out one day am I obliged to shut out folks with letters of introduction next mornin'? You be quiet, Molly."

Trudy was the next to speak.

"A sunny window, Mrs. Gay says. I s'pose we could fill the bill if our windows was washed, but they're so thick with dust you can't see through them."

"That's a fact," said Mrs. Preston. "I'll wash windows this morning; I might as well do it fust as last."

Dorothy's basket, borne by Robert, who this time escorted her, was a mass of lovely bloom and verdure. As she unpacked its treasures and saw the rapt ecstatic look which transformed the plain, hard-lined face of the woman whose one softness was to "dote on flowers,"



she wondered, more than ever, at her mother's gracious tact.

Meanwhile Robert was walking about just around the corner of the street below, keeping an eye as he sauntered to and fro on the house where his young mistress lingered. He had the nature of a watch-dog where she was in question. But he was not visible to them, and Dorothy made acquaintance with the girls.

The two kept on with their straw-sewing, Molly explaining that it was an order and had to be done by nightfall, and then, waxing confidential, Trudy said,

"We're working awfully hard now to get us black silks for Easter. Trimmed with lace and jet, you know. They'll cost sixty dollars apiece: but you might as well be out of the world as out of the fashion, and we can pay for them on the installment plan if we like. Lots of girls do."

"But," said Dorothy, timidly, "I have heard that the trouble in that plan is that you may have paid a half dozen installments and then fail in having one ready and lose what you're buying, after all."

"In furniture, perhaps," said Molly, laughing, "but not in gowns, for the gown would be half worn out, and what good would it be to take that back? I wish I



could pay cash down for every thing, but I can't, and a black silk dress I'm bound to have."

"Yes," said her sister, "and an Easter bonnet trimmed with real lace and daffodils."

"Why do you care for such expensive things?" asked Dorothy.

"Because," was the quick reply, "we're as good as the next one, and we're bound to show it, or else we can stay at home. We're not goin' to sit in Mrs. Howell's class and be outdone by any body. So, there! and if we work hard we've a right to have nice clothes."

"Tell your mother," interrupted Mrs. Preston, "I've not had any thing to please me as them posies have in years and years. Not since I was a girl on my father's farm. I'll take care of them, you bet!"

Linda and Nell were waiting for Dorothy when she reached home. They had established themselves in her pretty chamber. Nell was in her favorite attitude on the white fur rug in front of the fire that burned cheerily on the hearth. Linda was lost in a Sleepy Hollow chair. As Dorothy entered, the charm, the peace, the fullness of comfort, as compared with the home she had left, struck into her consciousness. How much she had, how little the others!



"Girls," she said, "we've got one thing before us. We've got to reconstruct our dress."

"I hope, Dorothy," said Nell, "that you're not going in for Mother Hubbards, and that sort of thing. Pray don't!"

"I've been to the Prestons'," was Dorothy's reply, "and I have had a revelation. Those girls are wearing themselves out sewing like automatons from morning to night, and living, I suppose, mainly on baker's bread and tea, and all for what, do you suppose? To buy themselves black silks trimmed with jet for Easter. And the dirt on their faces! O something must be done!"

"What do you propose, dear?" asked Linda, humming a tune under her breath.

"I propose that we girls, whose parents can afford to let us wear whatever we please that is elegant and costly, shall forego the merely selfish pleasure of fine dressing at church and Sunday-school hereafter. Molly Preston said 'one might as well be out of the world as out of the fashion.' Let us set the fashion of plain dress for public places in this town, at least."

"How can we?" queried Nell. "Our mothers may object if we make guys of ourselves."

"Ah! but that is what we do not intend doing. Cheap wools and calicoes may be as tastefully made as the



most costly satins and silks, may fit as exquisitely, and our dainty and costly attire may be reserved for occasions when display will be a temptation to nobody. For the sake of these, and hundreds like them, who are spending every penny they can obtain for fine clothes, let us bring about a change. If rich girls made up their minds and acted together it could be done."

"What shall we wear to Sunday-school to-morrow?" inquired practical Nell, stifling a sigh. For was there not in her wardrobe at home a claret-colored costume, velvet trimmed, with shifting lights and shades, in which the girl looked, and knew that she looked, like a veritable little princess? Hadn't she dreamed all the week of the pleasure she would have in wearing this where Ned Raymond's eyes would behold its gorgeousness?

But her fingers strayed to the silver cross pendent from her brooch. Her lips murmured softly "In His Name." She could make this small sacrifice.

Dorothy spoke firmly.

"I shall wear my old black serge. It's the only plain dress I have in perfect order."

"Well," said Nell, "then look for 'yours devotedly' in her present habit of sober gray. Girls, if you knew how hard it will be to leave my lovely claret cashmere in the closet you'd appreciate the effort I mean to make."



Dorothy thought of her text. Did it mean this? such little things, such trifles? Why not? Even the self-denial involved in giving up a chance to display one's person in brave attire may be accepted of Him who sees the motive of every act. This is not an offering to the Lord of that which costs nothing to the offerer.

"I," said the third of the trio, "will vie with you in modest raiment on my next public appearance at Sunday-school. I will array myself in a dull garb of unostentatious brown; and so far as we three can influence our set we'll put black silk and jet embroidery out of style, for the benefit of the Prestons and their set."

"But O, girls," pleaded Dorothy, "for pity's sake don't look conscious; don't act as if we were doing this on purpose. It would be fatal to success if they thought we were attitudinizing."

"Trust us to do the thing as it should be done," said Linda and Nell.





## CHAPTER III.

## GAINING AN INCH.

WHEN Dorothy "undertook" the Prestons she asked herself whether or not she could invite them, as she did her friends, into that sanctuary of repose, her own little room. It had seemed to her impossible ever to do so, the air of her chamber was so refined, so lovely were all the appointments.

"Was it necessary," she wondered, "to be on terms of intimacy with people who had nothing in common with her—no knowledge of her world, no acquaintance with the books which were her daily bread?"

Day by day she asked her own soul this question. To reach down to the Prestons was an easy matter, regarded in one light; she could give them flowers and papers and drives if she chose; could furnish pleasant evening entertainments for them at which one girl of her own circle would sing, another play, another read. But though Dorothy did this, and did it heartily, she felt somehow that she was not reaching her protégés as she desired to. They were still afar off.



To Cora Meredith she made her complaint, grieving that she could report no headway.

"They accept whatever I offer, and indeed Molly Preston is a perfect sponge, so far as absorbing entertainments and catching one's tone are concerned; but really, I am no better off, as to gaining their confidence, than I was at first. And I just can't and won't ask those girls to come to my home in the same free way that Nell and Linda do. Why, Cora, I'd have to air the rooms after they'd gone. I have to walk a square or two out of my way always to get rid of the odor of onions, corned-beef, cabbage, and such miscellaneous stuff after I've been to see the Prestons. Yet, Cora, they are certainly cleaner—house and family both."

Cora shook her head gravely.

"Dorothy, dear, I wouldn't ask them to visit me, if I were you, while I had that sort of protest in my heart. It wouldn't be a genuine invitation. But you'll have to be one of themselves, as you haven't been yet, before you'll do them any permanent good. You must put your heart into it, dear."

"And the discouraging part, Cora," affirmed Dorothy, blushing, "is that though Linda and Nell and ever so many of us have become as much like Sisters of Charity as possible in our attire it makes no perceptible impres-



sion on the Prestons. They wear as many furbelows as ever, they prink and fuss as much ; they are as evidently afraid of water and soap. Molly has been buying a black silk and Trudy is going to, and our example goes for nothing. But Mrs. Howell says I must be contented to work and await results."

"I was afraid you'd get discouraged, my darling."

Cora gazed meditatively on an engraving which hung on the wall, an illustration of Lowell's Sir Launfal. Under the picture was the legend, and she recited, *sotto voce*,

"Who gives himself with his alms feeds three :  
Himself, his sorrowing neighbor, and Me."

"You have yet to give yourself, my sweetest Dorothy," said Cora.

"But what ought I to do now ?"

"Wait until you are led. Do nothing whatever that is insincere. A girl's work for Jesus should be genuine. At present," pursued Cora, "I cannot see that you are under obligations to open your home any more freely to the Prestons than you are now doing. If special circumstances arise the way will be made plain above all. Wait till you are heart-ready."

Mrs. Howell met Dorothy a few days after this talk with a face full of concern.



"My dear," she said, "I have two perplexities. One is the chronic puzzle: What to do with the dozen or so girls in my class who ought to be leading safe, happy, easy lives in Christian homes as helpers—servants, if you please—but who shrink from the idea of service as demeaning; the other how to keep Molly Preston from making a wreck of her life by marrying when she has no idea of managing a home. You know Molly is in love?"

Dorothy's brown eyes opened widely in surprise.

"Indeed I did not!"

"And, my dear, she couldn't do worse than choose as she is doing—a youth who keeps no Sabbath, who is a loungeur around saloons, who is calculated to make her miserable. O, Dorothy," and the teacher's voice trembled, "I had such hopes when you joined forces with me; but neither of us has found the key."

"I'm afraid I haven't prayed enough," said Dorothy. "Nor been loving enough, either."

"Well, let us pray now, and the dear Lord may direct us. He is all love."

It seemed to Dorothy, when next she sat opposite Molly Preston in Sunday-school, that the latter's mien was harder, the black eyes bolder than ever. Both sisters were resplendent in finery, both were aggressive in



their bearing, and determined to show to all on-lookers that they were the equals of any body, let her be who she might. A more disagreeable type does not exist, but it is to be found in many an American city and town.

Dorothy prayed for the girls, and sooner than she anticipated the key which had so baffled them was put into her hands and those of Mrs. Howell. And as she prayed she began to love, and no longer stood apart in feeling.

"Please, miss," said the waitress, tapping at the drawing-room door, one evening when the judge had a dinner-party, "there's a woman in the hall who insists that she must see yourself. I tried to put her off and to get her to leave a message, but it was of no use. Insist on coming in she would, and she says she'll wait."

Dorothy slipped away from the guests she was entertaining, and in her clinging white dress, with flowers at her belt and the little cross at her throat, appeared in the hall to meet the eager, anxious face of Mrs. Preston.

"Molly's sick!" she exclaimed. "She's all run down. And she's been askin' for you—askin', askin' for hours. And the doctor says it's not contagious, and please, Miss Dorothy, when will you come?"



"I will be there early to-morrow morning, Mrs. Preston; but let me send Molly some grapes and an orange, so that she'll know I'm thinking of her."

The mother's face fell. She had come against her will, and now that she sat in the broad hall with its tessellated floor, on which lay here and there thick, warm rugs, soft to the foot and pleasing to the eye, as she saw the nodding ferns and green palms on the landings of the stairway, and observed on every side the evidences of taste, wealth, and splendor, her heart grew hot and rebellious. From the drawing-room came a subdued murmur of voices and little gushes of well-bred laughter, and presently the notes of the piano, silvery sweet, floated out from under the fingers of a skilled performer.

"Thank you, Miss Gay. Keep your grapes. My girl can do without them. You belong to one world and she to another, and I was a fool for comin' to you."

And drawing her shawl closely around her, stepping firmly, with her head high and her eyes blazing, the woman strode forth into the night.

Dorothy, her eyes dim and her lips quivering, could not immediately return to her guests. She sought her own room and struggled for calmness—found it by looking upward. A whispered word of prayer, a thought of the divine Friend who can overcome all difficulties if we



ask him in faith, and Dorothy went to her parlor to do her duty there until her father's friends took leave.

It was still early when the last guests said good-night, and then, just as she had always done since her babyhood, the girl sat down by her mother, and to that best confidante told the story of her day. When she had finished Mrs. Gay said, glancing at the bronze clock on the library mantel,

"I think I will go with you, dear, and we will visit Molly before we sleep. I can understand something of the mother's unreasonable behavior, and we can afford to overlook it. The thing we have to do is to make poor Molly comfortable if we possibly can."

It took but a few moments for mother and daughter to exchange their dinner-gowns for dark wools fit for the street, and heavy cloth ulsters and hoods. Judge Gay had some work in his study which he said would keep him up until midnight, so Robert was taken along as escort and protector, and soon after Molly, fretted and disappointed, had listened to her mother's recital of her call and its conclusion, and, turning her head upon the hard pillow, had uttered a wailing cry of,

"There now! you've offended her, and she'll never come any more," the ministering angels walked into the room.



What struck Dorothy then and on subsequent days was the lack of simple, attainable comforts in Molly's home. A white muslin night-dress costs necessarily only a few cents, if one has a needle-woman's facility and can make it for herself; but Molly and Trudy had spent every penny they could get for outside garments—silk, satin, jet, flowers, kid gloves, and other articles which they fancied they must have to put them on a par with their companions or to make them “look like other people.” They literally had not a nightgown of any description; their stockings were a mass of holes; of flannel skirts and other underwear there was an appalling absence. None of the things which were to Dorothy toilet essentials were to be seen in Molly's room, but on the shelf which did duty as dressing-case, bureau, and wardrobe for both girls, was a row of tiny scent-bottles—musk, jockey club, patchouli, stephanotis—showing whence had come the vulgarity of perfume which more than once had sent Dorothy gasping from their neighborhood on Sunday that she might get a breath of fresh air. As for the family washing, it was forever doing and never done.



## CHAPTER IV.

## HOLDING THE COPY CLOSE.

“UNLESS I can manage to present to those people a higher ideal,” said Dorothy to Cora, “I may as well give up and let somebody else try. I see where the trouble is—they are not following a good example.”

“When I was a little tot,” Cora answered, looking up from the dainty embroidery which lay upon her lap, “I used to be the despair of my teachers because I wrote so badly. I would blot the clean page, make pot-hooks instead of letters, and do ever so many things which brought me bad marks instead of good. But one day my writing-master said to me, ‘Cora, I notice that the first two or three lines on your page are always very well done; you do pretty well while the copy is close to you. I am going to set you three or four copies on the page after this, and if you look at them carefully I think you’ll improve.’ That was all. I tell it to you because in this, dear child, there is a parable.”

“You mean —”

“That your copy is too far away, Dorothy. You need



to set it oftener and more closely. Somehow you must make yourself more really one of themselves if you're going to change the Prestons. By the bye, did I or did I not see the mother at church with Trudy yesterday?"

"You did, my dear; and, what is more, she remained to the inquiry meeting. I suppose because Trudy wanted to stay and begged her mother to do so too. I never was more surprised in my life, and yet I ought not to have been, for I had been praying for that very thing to come to pass."

"Our little measure of faith must grieve the Master," said Cora Meredith. "Nothing hurts me like the having one of my friends doubt what I promise, and behave as though my word were of no account in my sight; so how must it be with Jesus?"

"I thought of that. But tell me, Cora, how can I take my copy nearer?"

Then the two heads were bent together over the work, and the talk went on in low, earnest tones.

Molly Preston was much better. Beef-tea and beef-steak, rest, and the new ideas of ventilation which had come to the flat in the wake of Dorothy Gay were restoring light to her eyes and color to her cheeks. There was an interval in the straw-sewing work, and Trudy and Molly were probably much worried, for they



had saved nothing when their weekly wages were coming in, and the mother, who had years ago put her tiny hoardings into the savings-bank, had drawn them nearly all out to meet the expenses of Molly's illness.

"You must *not* give them money," Mrs. Howell had said, with the emphasis of conviction, when talking of the matter with Dorothy. "I do not believe in making paupers of decent, hard-working people. Do not even lend them any money. The bearing of a burden of debt would be very apt to handicap them, and if they never paid the debt that would be worse than every thing else."

"Still they must live!" urged Dorothy.

"I wonder," mused Mrs. Howell, "whether Trudy would come here for a few weeks as seamstress? It would be a stepping-stone, if I could persuade her to try the work; to her finding permanent employment in a family."

"She dreads the name of servant."

"Yes, foolishly. Did not our Lord say to his disciples, 'I am among you as he that serveth?' Yet I will not offend her prejudices; what I want is to cultivate in her the germ of a truer dignity and independence. What is the trouble, Dorothy? I see the doubt in your eyes."



“Dear Mrs. Howell, I very much fear that your kind plan will fall to the ground simply for the reason that those poor things have never been taught to do the most ordinary kinds of work. Beyond their own specialty, which, of course, requires a certain knack, they are as ignorant and clumsy as they can be. Trudy would be of no use to you, dearest.”

“Well?” The older woman looked into the eyes of the younger, seeing there the dawn of a suggestion.

“Since ‘undertaking the Prestons,’” said Dorothy, wistfully, “I have done a good deal of thinking. And I’ve been wondering whether the very best thing I could do for them wouldn’t be to teach them to sew, both by hand and on the machine. You know, I imagine, that I do all kinds of sewing respectably. Chiefly, I fancy, because I’m the girl who hasn’t a talent of any description except the every-day ‘homey’ ones, and they don’t count.”

“Blessings on you, Dorothy! I look on your sewing and housewifery as quite equal to Nell’s and Linda’s rare bent in other and more showy directions. Proceed. Unfold your scheme.”

“It is this, dear lady. I’ll propose to Mrs. Preston—and I’m thankful to say that she will listen to me, since I’ve sat by Molly and helped nurse her—that if she’ll get



her washing done by Tuesday night I will come in every Wednesday morning with my thimble and cotton and help her and the girls do the mending. They never do any mending, but they might as well learn how. It would be a good beginning."

"Splendid!"

"You know, Mrs. Howell, that the poor waste more than the rich, owing to their want of system and of knowledge. I am struck with that when I see them throwing away good food which in our house is made over in some dainty way, or at least used in the soup-kettle, and when I find that new stockings are always bought the minute the old ones are worn a little, when they ought instead to be neatly darned."

"The stockings are poor affairs to begin with, probably."

"Precisely, and there you touch another weak place in their unthrifty management. They spend so much on the outside garments, show is so much more important to them than comfort, that there's nothing left for real must-haves—or what we would think to be such. Well, you will grow tired of my talking, Mrs. Howell. When I've taught the girls to sew, if I succeed, I'll feel that I've been of use in the world, stupid as I am."

She went away with her bright face and quick step,



leaving her friend to think that of all adjectives "stupid" was the one which least accurately described Dorothy Gay. Indeed, the sweet face was gaining in expression and purpose, were that possible.

"You see, miss," said Mrs. Preston, a few days afterward, "it doesn't seem worth while to mend things when they are as far gone as this skirt; I generally take such old duds to mop up the floor."

"You just wait till I show you how nicely this can be repaired," Dorothy answered, brightly. "Why, mother says that a lady can have no finer accomplishment than to know how to make the most of what she already has. We never throw any thing aside while it can be mended."

"La!" said Mrs. Preston.

"Are rich people so careful?" Trudy inquired, with an incredulous look which made Dorothy laugh.

"Trudy, dear, do you not know that there are degrees all over? The richest person in this town may measure what he has in comparison with somebody who is a great deal better off and feel poor by contrast. And you, in this pleasant little home, with that darling old gray cat purring by the stove, those flowers in the window, and your own mother to cook the dinner, cannot call yourself poor."



"We are better off," said Molly, with a new timidity, glancing from the straw sewing which she had again attempted, "than Jesus was, for he had no place to lay his head. I often think of that. Why, where can mother be going in such a hurry?"

There was a sound of commotion in the street below, shouts and screams were heard, then a tramping of feet in the lower hall, and the steady tread on the stairs of somebody who bore a burden.

Mrs. Preston had disappeared. The three girls listened as from the floor beneath came the wail of a woman's voice and the groan of a man as if in despair.

"It's Teddy MacGinnis; he's been hurt," said Trudy, with a swift intuition.

"Teddy's been killed," said her mother, coming in white and agitated, "The dear little fellow was playing not half an hour ago in the street before the door. He toddled off and somehow got under the wheels of the car and was crushed before the driver could stop his horses. Poor Mrs. MacGinnis!—and her man's like one beside himself with grief. Likely he'll take to drink now, poor fellow!"

Dorothy went home with a heavy heart. The little three-year-old boy had been almost under her feet many a time; she knew the white head and the sturdy little



figure far better than she did some of the pretty, well-dressed babies on her own square. And now he was snatched in a moment from the father and mother to whom he was every thing—pride, life's hope, joy in poverty. Dorothy sent for Nell and Linda, and they held a council of three then and there.

"Girls, let us establish a Day Nursery in Avenue R," said Linda, after they had talked around the subject and looked at it from every imaginable point of view. Somehow they felt as if they were to blame for Teddy's death.

"We haven't any money," said Nell, with the tone of a person who sees an insuperable obstacle. Then, rallying, she added, "But we'll have to get some. Here's a chance for the faith that removes mountains."

"I'm not troubled on the finances," was Linda's observation, "but I'm afraid the mothers won't let their children come. They may look suspiciously on our scheme and prefer to take care of their children themselves."

"You the one to say that, Linda, when we always think you so full of hope? Let me tell you for your confusion that, wherever the Day Nursery has been fairly tried, the mothers, as soon as they have ascertained its helpfulness, are very glad to send the little ones to a place



where they will have good care, instead of leaving them shut up in rooms where they may set themselves on fire, or else where they are in danger in the street. Girls, I've got a magnificent plan. I'll ask mamma to step here and we'll consult her. I think the Prestons could carry on the Nursery for us if we once had it started."

"The Prestons! Why not?" echoed Nell, after a moment's thought. "They are so improved."

And Mrs. Gay, who entered into the spirit of the thing, and was full of excellent suggestions, also said, "Why not?"





## CHAPTER V.

## THE JUDGE'S IDEA.

THAT Molly Preston was in love had been known to Mrs. Howell for some time, but she was persuaded that it was a mere girlish fancy, not the love which is the master-passion of a life ; therefore she welcomed every thing which could occupy Molly and give her a wider outlook. Many things should come into a girl's life before she puts her hand into that of another and begins with him the making of a new home. Above all, there should be a sense of responsibility to God and the full acceptance of duty which is to last for a whole life-time.

Molly had lately looked upon her life with new realization that she owed something to those about her and every thing to her Saviour. The almost daily intercourse with Dorothy and her friends, one or another of whom found frequent errands to the Prestons' flat, the books she had been reading, the greater refinement which insensibly but surely had influenced personal habits and desires—these all helped to make her more exacting in her choice of a husband. To her teacher's great delight



she found Molly Preston busy just now with her own character-building, and willing to leave other events to the future and Providence.

So when the Day Nursery was proposed the girls found in the Prestons the very assistants they needed. A small house was rented, Judge Gay guaranteeing to make up deficiencies for the first year provided the girls did their best to make accounts meet.

Here Mrs. Preston was installed as matron, with a general oversight of the household economy. Trudy and Molly were established as her assistants. In one room a half dozen cribs and cradles were placed; these, with their mattresses and spreads and soft blankets, costing nothing in money, for the girls begged for them from the nurseries of friends whose babies had been graduated to the school-room. All sorts of toys were asked for and obtained; also, by the same method, scrap picture-books and boxes of building-blocks for older children were procured. Crackers, bread, milk, vegetables, and meat, coal and wood were matters of outlay; and to begin a fund for these the three, Linda, Nell, and Dorothy, gave an entertainment in Cora Meredith's parlor.

The "In His Name Nursery" speedily gathered a score of babies from two months to two years old into its



daily and friendly shelter, and before it had been in operation a year its limit of children under six was reached. Mrs. Preston proved herself an able manager, keeping faithful tally of the money brought in by the mothers, who paid from two to five cents a day for the care which was bestowed on their children. To have kept the little ones without charge while their mothers were at work would have been to offer them a charity, and Dorothy, true to Mrs. Howell's teaching, would not do that.

"It is a business arrangement," she explained. "We who have time, and who love little children, open this house and provide a pleasant home, good food, and teaching for those who are old enough, so that you mothers may go to your work with easy minds. You will feel happy if you trust the dear little things to us, and we, on our part, will promise not to betray your trust."

From the sudden death of little Teddy sprang the flower of a noble and beautiful work for Christ.

But Dorothy Gay was not satisfied. One never is with first steps. The girl who had no talent to speak of found out that she had one gift, at least, equal in value to any talent—she always had time to think of other people and provide for their comfort. In these



busy days the woman who has "time" is very much prized.

Her father gave her the prompting to her next bit of work. She was pouring his coffee one morning, her mother not having yet come down to breakfast. The judge was very proud of his capable daughter Dorothy, so modest in her own conception of her work but so thorough and straightforward in carrying on whatever she undertook. He boasted that his girl had a thoroughly masculine good sense. He was mistaken. It was feminine, which is as good as the other.

"I've another campaign for you, pet," he said, dropping a third lump into the amber beverage—the judge liked his coffee syrupy sweet.

"And what is it, papa, dear?" said Dorothy, looking brightly up. "I am at your orders."

"I want you and your girls—all of them, mind—to come to our prayer-meeting to-night, and give us a lift with the music. The singing, Dorothy, is something to make angels shudder, and it nearly sets me frantic. I am not an angel, as you know."

"I'm not sure, papa. It's my firm belief that you keep a pair of invisible wings tucked away under your coat-sleeves. But, papa, are you not talking of the young men's meeting—the meeting which grew out of



the boys' club? You don't want girls there, surely. It would be a new departure!"

"My love, it is just there that I do want girls. The error has been in leaving them out. If I saw any good reason for supposing that the boys would do better alone I would not ask your help. But we find it difficult to keep the hold we desire on the fellows, surrounded as they are by temptations, and we begin to feel that the Lord knew what he was about when he set the children of men into families—brothers and sisters together. At all events, my blessing, I want you and your woman's wit at the Olivet Mission, and I think Mrs. Howell's whole class and your special Ten will not be the very least in the way. Can you rally your class?"

When Dorothy, escorted by her father, and followed by Linda and Nell, made their appearance in the hall where for some months boys' and young men's meetings had been going on there was a quickly-suppressed stir, possibly a slight feeling of protest. But presently in dropped Molly and Trudy; then came Cora Meredith and another bevy, and before long the meeting was under full tide. The singing was greatly improved by the sweet sopranos and altos which lent it volume and gave it impulse; and when Judge Gay, at a stage in the proceedings, called for texts, the girls proved



their familiarity with the word by reciting bravely and freely.

"The best meeting we've had this year," was the verdict, and in the social half hour that followed girls and boys found plenty to say to one another. The silver crosses were every-where, and they seemed to have magic.

"You see," Judge Gay commented, as he took Dorothy home, "these poor fellows have no home-life here in town. They either board, which means a bed in a cold hall chamber and a seat at a not over clean table, very different from the country farm-house fare which some of them have known, or else they live in tenements in a crowded, uncomfortable way, where there is no privacy and very little chance for any enjoyment. They go to the street for company, and, if it happens to be cold, there on the corner is the saloon, with its warm fires, its bright lights, its air of good fellowship, which in the beginning is more of a temptation than the drink. I've been over the whole ground in my mind, and I see how easy the way is made for a homeless fellow to go down.

" 'Broad is the road that leads to death,  
And thousands walk together there !'

"Now, if you girls and your mothers could open a



place in opposition to the saloon for just a few of these young men you'd be doing a noble thing, Dorothy, my dear."

Mrs. Gay was to be counted on in any thing which enlisted her husband and child; yet even she was a little staggered when these two, having put their heads—the gold-brown and silver gray—together, came to her with a rather alarming proposition.

"You do not surely mean to have a Holly-tree Inn here in our own house!" she exclaimed in great surprise. "Why, think of the wear and tear on the carpets, of the publicity, of the doubtful characters who might come in!"

"There's a good deal to be said against it, mother," admitted the judge, who was always fair, and could see both sides of a question.

"But, mamma," said our Dorothy, of whom it must be confessed that the side of the question which made the strongest appeal to her sympathy was the one she generally saw most plainly, "what are carpets in comparison with men's lives? Besides, we have that whole basement floor, which could be fitted up with linoleum, have pictures and maps on the walls, tables and chairs brought in and arranged so that it would make a charming club-room. Give us girls *carte blanche*, mother,



matronize the proceedings, and please let us try what we can do. Let us keep the cobwebs out of the basement."

The conclusion was that Dorothy had her way, her father declaring that it was a very good way, and that his little girl possessed a genius for administration. Certainly, as she kept her hands on the wheels, now of this movement, now of that, Dorothy's quiet personality was exerting its influence with much power. For, girls, after all, it is not what we do, nor what we say, so much as what we are which impresses for good or ill those whom we daily meet.

"Who is that rather out-at-the-elbows young man who was so attracted to those pictures of the cathedrals the time we had a stereopticon exhibition?" inquired Linda, soon after the evenings were in progress. "He has a fine face, only so lacking in cultivation. It is a starved face every way."

"Why, Linda, that's the youth who has been courting Molly Preston," explained Dorothy. "We do not think him her equal, and have been hoping that they would drift apart; but he follows her up, and she is the magnet which has brought him here."

"Humph!" said Linda, "I think it's a serious thing to try to keep apart two people who love each other.



My idea would be to raise him to her level. I'll do all I can to help him on. Do you know, Dorothy, what that young man's business is, and whether he has steady work to do? This may be his salvation."

"We can ascertain all about him. Papa wants the young fellows who come here to be kept under his own eye, in such matters as that, and when he sees a deserving one he means to give him a lift—indirectly, of course. We were afraid Rolf Heber drank, but they say he does not now."

"I would say if your father is interested that he will give him a true helping hand. I heard a woman say the other day that there was nothing in life so strong and so blessed as the grace of the down-reaching hand; the one a little higher up the mountain-side reaching down and thus assisting the one who was climbing. It was ever so much better than the boost from beneath. And, when you consider, so it is."

"True, Linda; but I draw the line at match-making myself. Have you been into the Nursery this week?"

"Yes. There are few weeks I am not there."

"And have you seen that Molly has picked up kindergarten methods, and is teaching the children in some of those pretty ways which that system has brought into vogue? That girl is a genius, Linda. By the way, she



and Trudy are coming here to supper, and Nell will be in, with Cora and Mrs. Howell. Won't you come with us?"

So at last Dorothy had crossed the Rubicon, and the two whom she had done so much to elevate were to be guests in her own dainty little nest, at her mother's beautiful table, treated as if they belonged to her own especial set.

Was this needful? Perhaps not; but Dorothy had reached the place where—to satisfy, not her conscience, but her heart—she could do no less.





## CHAPTER VI.

## THE ONE-TALENT TEN.

IT was on a warm spring day that the plant-show, Mrs. Gay's pet enterprise, invited its guests. To set the flowers out in their fullest beauty Mrs. Gay had cleared her drawing-room of sofas, chairs, easels, tables, and knick-knacks, while the windows, the mantels, and the arrangements of shelves set and hung for the purpose gave opportunity for the display of the finest flowers. Not Mrs. Preston only, but a dozen other women of varying circumstances brought their pots, baskets, and bouquets, and after every thing was in order, and the guests grouped on the camp-seats which had been provided, Linda sang and played as even she seldom did. Then, hand in hand, a little procession from the Nursery walked in two by two, and under Molly's guidance went through some of the pretty kindergarten movements, to the delight of those who saw them—notably of their own mothers. Refreshments were served, and there was a re-distribution of the flowers; some going to one house, some to another, many to the hospitals, some to the blind, who, though they



do not see the exquisite coloring and texture, love the perfume of the blossoms and like to feel the satin-smooth petals.

The Prestons had given up their flat and moved into the house where the Nursery was located, it having been found necessary that somebody should live there all the time. Molly was soon to be married, and Rolf would be the man in the house—a great convenience, said Mrs. Preston, practically; thinking of the many times when a man's strength comes in as a pleasant help in household life. Rolf's handiness with tools and his engagement with a carpenter made it probable that he would be able to support Molly, and Dorothy, now that Rolf had signed a Christian Endeavor pledge, and Molly had learned how to cook and to sew, felt very hopeful that the two would establish themselves in a happy home life. No need to complain of Trudy or Molly for carelessness about personal neatness in these days. The scent-bottles had gone into the ash-barrel, and in their places white castile soap and clean towels reigned supreme. The date of this revolution, if the girls had chosen to tell it, was the date of the day when Dorothy wrote in her diary :

“I have had the Prestons to tea. They seemed to enjoy it very much, and betrayed no unfamiliarity with



table furniture and etiquette. I'm glad I asked them here, girl to girl ; as we all sat in my room after supper gossiping—girl fashion—I found out that we had a dozen things in common of which I had never dreamed. And then there is the one great bond, for both Molly and Trudy have given their hearts to Jesus. They are so full of love to him, and so anxious to serve, and already they have begun to form each her own Ten among the hat-pressers and straw-sewers; so there will be a large company in Avenue R and the streets near by working together In His Name. O, I am so sorry and so ashamed of having been such a Pharisee in days not long ago. I used to sing :

‘ Is there a lamb in all thy flock  
I would disdain to feed;  
Is there a foe before whose face  
I'd fear thy cause to plead ? ’

And I thought I meant it. But I hadn't learned the alphabet then of such sweet and blessed meaning.”

As I said, the girls threw their scent-bottles away and took in earnest to soap and water after they had spent those charmed hours in Dorothy's domain.

“ If we can't have ivory and silver on our combs and brushes, and all sorts of dainty pretty things on our bureaus, we can have whole and clean things and be



done with shams," said Trudy, positively. "I never in my life shall be satisfied with imitations after this. What I have and do shall be Simon Pure; true through and through."

"Amen to that," was Molly's reply.

Linda Creamer, Nell King, and Dorothy Gay lingered again one evening in Cora Meredith's parlors as Cora settled the room after a meeting of their Ten. Nell had just met with a great success. A picture of hers had been admitted to the water-color exhibition and at once purchased at a high price by a connoisseur in art. Nell had been walking on air ever since. She saw looming before her—a possibility at last—something for which she had only half-dared to hope: a year's residence in Munich, to study the art which more than any thing else on earth filled the measure of her aspirations.

Linda was also crowned with an invisible wreath of joy. Her diligent piano practice, day in and day out six hours a day, had brought her to a stage of development where her teachers insisted that Stuttgart or Berlin must aid her further progress. As her parents were soon going abroad Linda's eyes were penetrating the future, and she was fancying the grand chances for study which were to be her own on the other side of the broad Atlantic. More than ever her singing had grown to be to her



like daily bread, and her music was a thread leading her heavenward.

Cora, too, had her reasons for gladness. To her, as to many a novice knocking at the gates of literature, had come many a disappointment in the shape of manuscripts "declined with thanks." Too proud to speak of such defeats she had often dropped hot tears upon the innocent printed notice, so courteous, yet so cold, with its "unavailable" blotting her hopes out of existence. But not for nothing had Cora the grit of her New England forefathers, and she had learned by heart and put into practice the homely couplet,

"If at first you don't succeed,  
Try, try again."

Now her pluck and patience and perseverance, those excellent p's had brought their reward. Cora Meredith's name was published among the contributors to a popular periodical; a little book of hers was in its third edition, and, better still, editors were beginning to ask her for contributions. Happy girl! Only those who have passed through her novitiate can sympathize in her satisfaction.

It had been a delightful meeting of the Ten, and congratulations had poured on the three whose cups were so full of thankful joy. Now, when the rest had



gone, Dorothy had her personal word of praise for each. She honestly thought that no lot in life could be so blessed as that of those on whom the Master had bestowed some wonderful gift, some divine endowment which could be put at interest for him.

But she was not prepared to have Linda exclaim,

"If you want to know who has the ten talents, I declare I believe it to be Dorothy. She is of so much use. She has only to start an enterprise and it goes forward. She can conquer those who are reluctant and win the most hateful to sweetness."

"Yes," said Cora, "Dorothy's doing goes farther than my writing, and that I shall always affirm. In fact, I get half my stories and ever so many of my poems out of her dear life."

"And," Nell added, "I think it's a higher work to impress one's life on other lives than to make the prettiest pictures and sell them for the highest prices. Dorothy, we mean all we say—and more; more."

A very bright smile illumined Dorothy's face. She looked singularly happy and at peace.

"You are all very good. But, dears, I do not need your assurances now, for I have left behind me all the worry and dissatisfaction, all the fretting because my work must lie in lowly places and among the obscure.



I see that my business is to shine in the corner where the dear Lord has placed me, keeping my own corner bright and doing only what Jesus tells Dorothy Gay to do. I have learned a great deal since I bemoaned myself that I had nothing more splendid before me than 'undertaking the Prestons.' "

Dear girls, if this little true story is to do good to any of you, will you take to heart its simple lessons? Do not stand afar off from the poor in your charitable work. Be of themselves if you would carry Christ into their homes. Do not be scornful of small every-day talents, but sew, keep house, entertain friends, and attend to whatever else is given you, "In His Name." For he sees and he cares; and he requires of each of us to do our very best in the sphere where he has ordained our service.

After all, the sweetest of compliments was paid to Dorothy, not by the Prestons, who looked upon her as their patron saint and guardian angel combined, not by Mrs. Howell, to whom she was a great comfort as well as a tried ally, not by any of her Ten, with whom she was a favorite, but by her own father.

Judge Gay was very weary. He had been trying a difficult case, and after listening to hours of argument by



learned lawyers and giving decisions on mooted points he came home. His wife was sitting in her easy-chair beside a cheerful fire. She rose to give him a welcoming kiss. Dorothy came to help him off with his coat and held the dressing-gown for him to put on, bringing him next a cup of tea, and hovering about with tender attentions. As she left the room the parents' eyes met, and the father, speaking softly, said,

“I thank God for the best daughter a man ever had.”

And that is all I have to tell you about Dorothy Gay. She is a real girl, her work is real, her friends adore her, and just what she is doing you may do if you choose.

THE END.



























LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00020783370

